MANDRAGOLA

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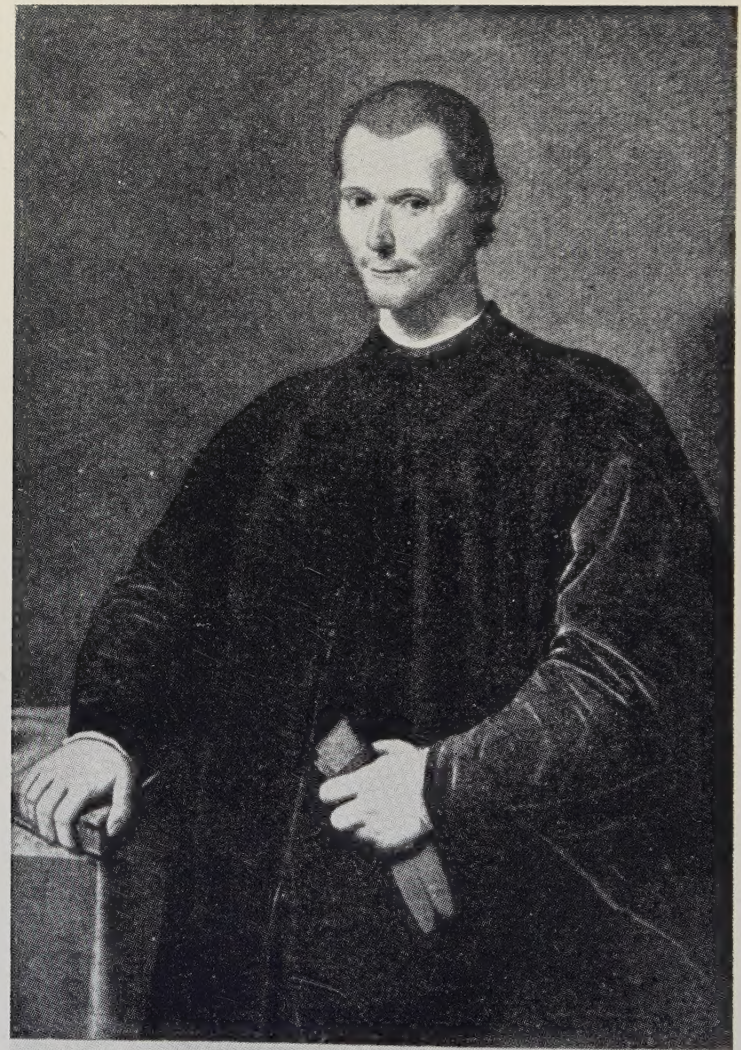

Niccolò Machiavelli

MANDRAGOLA

BY

NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI

TRANSLATED BY

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MANDRAGOLA

During one of the depressions of his colorful political career, Niccolo Machiavelli wrote the brilliant comedy, "Mandragola," which marks the renaissance of the modern Italian drama. Machiavelli, born in Florence on May 5, 1469, was about 45 years old when he turned playwright. The exact date of the completion of "Mandragola" is unknown, but the best authorities have fixed it as 1514. The oldest extant copy of the famous comedy, preserved in Venice, is dated 1524.

"Mandragola" was first produced in Florence, where its success was overwhelming. His Holiness, Pope Leo X., having heard of the new play, ordered a theater to be erected to enable the Romans to enjoy the hilarious spectacle, and commanded the original Florentine company to present it in Rome. Three and a half centuries later, in 1887, "Mandragola" was produced in Milan, at the Dal Verme, the ladies in the audience wearing masks!

The almost incredible plot of "Mandragola" is based on an actual occurrence in Florence in 1504. Even the names of the characters in the comedy are believed to be genuine. Mandragola is a medicinal herb found in Southern Europe, and resembling

in structure the human body. No herb was as famous among the ancient healers and medieval botanists as mandragola. The popular lore had endowed it with supernatural curative powers. He who possessed the root of mandragola had access to eternal youth, love, happiness, and charm. It was administered to make sterile women bear children, it was employed as a means of dispelling witchcraft, its sap was said to contain magic qualities. In the days of Machiavelli, a specimen of mandragola was obtainable from special traders at a very high price, for the popular belief held it to be very rare and difficult to secure. The tradition was that he who touched the plant first, was doomed. It was, therefore, necessary to sacrifice the life of an animal to mandragola. According to the Greek and Italian legends, a black dog was required to pull the root of the herb out of the soil. This legend Machiavelli employed as the corner-stone of his comedy.

The vast literature on Machiavelli includes extensive comments on "Mandragola." The highest tribute to the great Florentine's dramatic masterpiece belongs to the pen of Voltaire. "Machiavelli's 'Mandragola' is worth more," wrote the immortal Frenchman, "than all the comedies of

Aristophanes. Besides, Machiavelli was a superb historian, with whom a brilliant wit, but wit only, such as Aristophanes, will stand no comparison."

As far as all the available records indicate, this is the first translation into the English language of "Mandragola." Lord Macaulay's essay on Machiavelli, unfortunately little known on this side of the Atlantic, is published here in full not only because it presents a masterful analysis of "Mandragola," but also because its revolutionary appraisal of Machiavelli seems so eminently fitting for our own age.

ISAAC DON LEVINE

Machiavelli

By T. Babington Macaulay

We doubt whether any name in literary history be so generally odious as that of the man whose character and writings we now propose to consider. The terms in which he is commonly described would seem to import that he was the Tempter, the Evil Principle, the discoverer of ambition and revenge, the original inventor of perjury; that, before the publication of his fatal Prince, there had never been a hypocrite, a tyrant, or a traitor, a simulated virtue or a convenient crime. One writer gravely assures us, that Maurice of Saxony learned all his fraudulent policy from that execrable volume. Another remarks that since it was translated into Turkish, the Sultans have been more addicted than formerly to the custom of strangling their brothers. Our own foolish Lord Lyttleton charges the poor Florentine with the manifold treasons of the House of Guise, and the massacre of St. Bartholomew. Several authors have hinted that the Gunpowder Plot is to be primarily attributed to his doctrines, and seem to think that his effigy ought to be sub-

stituted for that of Guy Fawkes, in those processions by which the ingenuous youth of England annually commemorate the preservation of the Three Estates. The Church of Rome has pronounced his works accursed things. Nor have our own countrymen been backward in testifying their opinion of his merits. Out of his surname they have coined an epithet for a knave—and out of his Christian name a synonym for the Devil.*

It is indeed scarcely possible for any person, not well acquainted with the history and literature of Italy, to read without horror and amazement, the celebrated treatise which has brought so much obloquy on the name of Machiavelli. Such a display of wickedness, naked, yet not ashamed, such cool, judicious, scientific atrocity, seem rather to belong to a fiend than to the most depraved of men. Principles which the most hardened ruffian would scarcely hint to his most trusted accomplice, or avow, without the disguise of some palliating sophism, even to his own mind, are professed without the slightest circumlocution, and assumed as the fundamental axioms of all political science.

* Nick Machiavel had ne'er a trick,
Tho' he gave his name to our old Nick.
Hudibras, Part III. Canto I.

But, we believe, there is a schism on this subject among the Antiquaries.

It is not strange that ordinary readers should regard the author of such a book as the most depraved and shameless of human beings. Wise men, however, have always been inclined to look with great suspicion on the angels and demons of the multitude; and in the present instance, several circumstances have led even superficial observers to question the justice of the vulgar decision. It is notorious that Machiavelli was, through life, a zealous republican. In the same year in which he composed his manual of Kingcraft, he suffered imprisonment and torture in the cause of public liberty. It seems inconceivable that the martyr of freedom should have designedly acted as the apostle of tyranny. Several eminent writers have, therefore, endeavored to detect, in this unfortunate performance, some concealed meaning more consistent with the character and conduct of the author than that which appears at the first glance.

One hypothesis is, that Machiavelli intended to practice on the young Lorenzo de Medici, a fraud, similar to that which Sunderland is said to have employed against our James the Second, —that he urged his pupil to violent and perfidious measures, as the surest means of accelerating the moment of deliverance and revenge. An-

other supposition, which Lord Bacon seems to countenance, is that the treatise was merely a piece of grave irony, intended to warn nations against the arts of ambitious men. It would be easy to show that neither of these solutions is consistent with many passages in the *Prince* itself. But the most decisive refutation is that which is furnished by the other works of Machiavelli. In all the writings which he gave to the public, and in all those which the research of editors has, in the course of three centuries, discovered—in his Comedies, designed for the entertainment of the multitude—in his Comments on Livy, intended for the perusal of the most enthusiastic patriots of Florence—in his History, inscribed to one of the most amiable and estimable of the Popes—in his Public Dispatches —in his private Memoranda, the same obliquity of moral principle for which the *Prince* is so severely censured is more or less discernible. We doubt whether it would be possible to find, in all the many volumes of his compositions, a single expression indicating that simulation and treachery had ever struck him as discreditable.

After this it may seem ridiculous to say, that we are acquainted with few writings which exhibit

so much elevation of sentiment, so pure and warm a zeal for the public good, or so just a view of the duties and rights of citizens, as those of Machiavelli. Yet so it is. And even from the *Prince* itself we could select many passages in support of this remark. To a reader of our age and country, this inconsistency is, at first, perfectly bewildering. The whole man seems to be an enigma—a grotesque assemblage of incongruous qualities—selfishness and generosity, cruelty and benevolence, craft and simplicity, abject villainy and romantic heroism. One sentence is such as a veteran diplomatist would scarcely write in cipher for the direction of his most confidential spy: the next seems to be extracted from a theme composed by an ardent schoolboy on the death of Leonidas. An act of dexterous perfidy and an act of patriotic self-devotion, call forth the same kind and the same degree of respectful admiration. The moral sensibility of the writer seems at once to be morbidly obtuse and morbidly acute. Two characters altogether dissimilar are united in him. They are not merely joined, but interwoven. They are the warp and the woof of his mind; and their combination, like that of the variegated threads in shot silk, gives to the whole texture a

glancing and ever-changing appearance. The explanation might have been easy, if he had been a very weak or a very affected man. But he was evidently neither the one nor the other. His works prove beyond all contradiction, that his understanding was strong, his taste pure, and his sense of the ridiculous exquisitely keen.

This is strange—and yet the strangest is behind. There is no reason whatever to think, that those amongst whom he lived saw anything shocking or incongruous in his writings. Abundant proofs remain of the high estimation in which both his works and his person were held by the most respectable among his contemporaries. Clement the Seventh patronized the publication of those very books which the Council of Trent, in the following generation, pronounced unfit for the perusal of Christians. Some members of the democratical party censured the secretary for dedicating the *Prince* to a patron who bore the unpopular name of Medici. But to those immortal doctrines, which have since called forth such severe reprehensions, no exception appears to have been taken. The cry against them was first raised beyond the Alps—and seems to have been heard with amazement in Italy. The earliest assailant, as far as we are

aware, was a countryman of our own, Cardinal Pole. The author of the Anti-Machiavelli was a French Protestant.

It is, therefore, in the state of moral feeling among the Italians of those times, that we must seek for the real explanation of what seems most mysterious in the life and writings of this remarkable man. As this is a subject which suggests many interesting considerations, both political and metaphysical, we shall make no apology for discussing it at some length.

During the gloomy and disastrous centuries which followed the downfall of the Roman Empire, Italy had preserved, in a far greater degree than any other part of Western Europe, the traces of ancient civilization. The night which descended upon her was the night of an arctic summer:—the dawn began to reappear before the last reflection of the preceding sunset had faded from the horizon. It was in the time of the French Merovingians, and of the Saxon Heptarchy, that ignorance and ferocity seemed to have done their worst. Yet even then the Neapolitan provinces, recognizing the authority of the Eastern Empire, preserved something of Eastern knowledge and refinement. Rome, protected by the sacred character of its pontiffs,

enjoyed at least comparative security and repose. Even in those regions where the sanguinary Lombards had fixed their monarchy, there was incomparably more wealth, of information, of physical comfort, and of social order, than could be found in Gaul, Britain, or Germany.

That which most distinguished Italy from the neighboring countries was the importance which the population of the towns, from a very early period, began to acquire. Some cities, founded in wild and remote situations, by fugitives who had escaped from the rage of the barbarians, preserved their freedom by their obscurity, till they became able to preserve it by their power. Others seemed to have retained, under all the changing dynasties of invaders, under Odoacer and Theodoric, Narses and Alboin, the municipal institutions which had been conferred on them by the liberal policy of the Great Republic. In provinces which the central government was too feeble either to protect or to oppress, these institutions first acquired stability and vigor. The citizens, defended by their walls and governed by their own magistrates and their own by-laws, enjoyed a considerable share of republican independence. Thus a strong democratic spirit was called into action. The Carlovingian sov-

ereigns were to imbecile to subdue it. The generous policy of Otho encouraged it. It might perhaps have been suppressed by a close coalition between the Church and the Empire. It was fostered and invigorated by their disputes. In the twelfth century it attained its full vigor, and, after a long and doubtful conflict, it triumphed over the abilities and courage of the Swabian Princes.

The assistance of the ecclesiastical power had greatly contributed to the success of the Guelfs. That success would, however, have been a doubtful good, if its only effect had been to substitute a moral for a political servitude, to exalt the Popes at the expense of the Cæsars. Happily the public mind of Italy had long contained the seeds of free opinions, which were now rapidly developed by the genial influence of free institutions. The people of that country had observed the whole machinery of the church, its saints and its miracles, its lofty pretensions and its splendid ceremonial, its worthless blessings and its harmless curses, too long and too closely to be duped. They stood behind the scenes on which others were gazing with childish awe and interest. They witnessed the arrangement of the pulleys, and the manufacture of the thunders. They saw the natural faces and heard

the natural voices of the actors. Distant nations looked on the Pope as the vicegerent of the Almighty, the oracle of the All-wise, the umpire from whose decisions, in the disputes either of theologians or of kings, no Christian ought to appeal. The Italians were acquainted with all the follies of his youth, and with all the dishonest arts by which he had attained power. They knew how often he had employed the keys of the church to release himself from the most sacred engagements, and its wealth to pamper his mistresses and nephews. The doctrines and rights of the established religion they treated with decent reverence. But though they still called themselves Catholics, they had ceased to be Papists. Those spiritual arms, which carried terror into the palaces and camps of the proudest sovereigns, excited only their contempt. When Alexander commanded our Henry the Second to submit to the lash before the tomb of a rebellious subject, he was himself an exile. The Romans, apprehending that he entertained designs against their liberties, had driven him from their city; and, though he solemnly promised to confine himself for the future to his spiritual functions, they still refused to re-admit him.

In every other part of Europe, a large and

powerful privileged class trampled on the people and defied the government. But in the most flourishing parts of Italy the feudal nobles were reduced to comparative insignificance. In some districts they took shelter under the protection of the powerful commonwealths which they were unable to oppose, and gradually sunk into the mass of burghers. In others they possessed great influence; but it was an influence widely different from that which was exercised by the chieftains of the Transalpine kingdoms. They were not petty princes, but eminent citizens. Instead of strengthening their fastnesses among the mountains, they embellished their places in the market-place. The state of society in the Neapolitan dominions, and in some parts of the Ecclesiastical State, more nearly resembled that which existed in the great monarchies of Europe. But the governments of Lombardy and Tuscany, through all their revolutions, preserved a different character. A people, when assembled in a town, is far more formidable to its rulers than when dispersed over a wide extent of country. The most arbitrary of the Cæsars found it necessary to feed and divert the inhabitants of their unwieldy capital at the expense of the provinces. The citizens of Madrid have more than once besieged their

sovereign in his own palace, and extorted from him the most humiliating concessions. The sultans have often been compelled to propitiate the furious rabble of Constantinople with the head of an unpopular vizier. From the same cause there was a certain tinge of democracy in the monarchies and aristocracies of Northern Italy.

Thus liberty, partially, indeed, and transiently, revisited Italy; and with liberty came commerce and empire, science and taste, all the comforts and all the ornaments of life. The crusades, from which the inhabitants of other countries gained nothing but relics and wounds, brought the rising commonwealths of the Adriatic and Tyrrhene seas a large increase of wealth, dominion, and knowledge. Their moral and their geographical position enabled them to profit alike by the barbarism of the West and the civilization of the East. Their ships covered every sea. Their factories rose on every shore. Their money-changers set their tables in every city. Manufactures flourished. Banks were established. The operations of the commercial machine were facilitated by many useful and beautiful inventions. We doubt whether any country of Europe, our own perhaps excepted, have at the present time reached so high a point of wealth and

civilization as some parts of Italy had attained four hundred years ago. Historians rarely descend to those details from which alone the real state of the community can be collected. Hence, posterity is too often deceived by the vague hyperboles of poets and rhetoricians, who mistake the splendor of a court for the happiness of a people. Fortunately, John Villani has given us an ample and precise account of the state of Florence in the earlier part of the fourteenth century. The revenue of the republic amounted to three hundred thousand florins, a sum which, allowing for the depreciation of the precious metals, was at least equivalent to six hundred thousand pounds sterling; a larger sum than England and Ireland two centuries ago, yielded annually to Elizabeth—a larger sum than, according to any computation which we have seen, the Grand-duke of Tuscany now derives from a territory of much greater extent. The manufacture of wool alone, employed two hundred factories and thirty thousand workmen. The cloth annually produced sold, at an average, for twelve hundred thousand florins; a sum fairly equal, in exchangeable value, to two millions and a half of our money. Four hundred thousand florins were annually coined. Eighty banks conducted the

commercial operations, not of Florence only, but of all Europe. The transactions of these establishments were sometimes of magnitude which may surprise even the contemporaries of the Barings and the Rothschilds. Two houses advanced to Edward the Third of England upwards of three hundred thousand marks, at a time when the mark contained more silver than fifty shillings of the present day, and when the value of silver was more than quadruple of what it now it. The city and its environs contained a hundred and seventy thousand inhabitants. In the various schools about ten thousand children were taught to read; twelve hundred studied arithmetic; six hundred received a learned education. The progress of elegant literature and of the fine arts was proportioned to that of the public prosperity. Under the despotic successors of Augustus, all the fields of the intellect had been turned into arid wastes, still marked out by formal boundaries, still retaining the traces of old cultivation, but yielding neither flowers nor fruit. The deluge of barbarism came. It swept away all the landmarks. It obliterated all the signs of former tillage. But it fertilized while it devastated. When it receded, the wilderness was as the garden of God, rejoicing on every side,

laughing, clapping its hands, pouring forth in spontaneous abundance everything brilliant, or fragrant, or nourishing. A new language, characterized by simple sweetness and simple energy, had attained its perfection. No tongue ever furnished more gorgeous and vivid tints to poetry; nor was it long before a poet appeared who knew how to employ them. Early in the fourteenth century came forth the Divine Comedy, beyond comparison the greatest work of imagination which had appeared since the poems of Homer. The following generation produced, indeed, no second Dante; but it was eminently distinguished by general intellectual activity. The study of the Latin writers had never been wholly neglected in Italy. But Petrarch introduced a more profound, liberal, and elegant scholarship; and communicated to his countrymen that enthusiasm for the literature, the history, and the antiquities of Rome, which divided his own heart with a frigid mistress and a more frigid muse. Boccaccio turned their attention to the more sublime and graceful models of Greece.

From this time the admiration of learning and genius became almost an idolatry among the people of Italy. Kings and republics, cardinals and doges, vied with each other in honoring and flattering

Petrarch. Embassies from rival states solicited the honor of his instructions. His coronation agitated the court of Naples and the people of Rome as much as the most important political transactions could have done. To collect books and antiques, to found professorships, to patronize men of learning, became almost universal fashions among the great. The spirit of literary research allied itself to that of commercial enterprise. Every place to which the merchant-princes of Florence extended their gigantic traffic, from the bazaars of the Tigris to the monasteries of the Clyde, was ransacked for medals and manuscripts. Architecture, painting and sculpture were munificently encouraged. Indeed, it would be difficult to name an Italian of eminence during the period of which we speak, who, whatever may have been his general character, did not at least affect a love of letters and of the arts.

Knowledge and public prosperity continued to advance together. Both attained their meridian in the age of Lorenzo the Magnificent. We cannot refrain from quoting the splendid passage, in which the Tuscan Thucydides describes the state of Italy at that period:—"Ridotta tutta in somma pace e tranquillità, coltivata non meno ne' luoghi più mon-

tuosi e più sterili che nelle pianure e regioni più fertili, nè sottoposta ad altro imperio che de 'suoi medesimi, non solo era abbondantissima d'abitatori e di ricchezze; ma illustrata sommamente dalla magnificenza di molto principi, dallo splendore di molte nobilissime e billissime città, dalla sedia e maestà delle religione, fioriva d'uomini prestantissimi nell' amministrazione delle cose pubbliche, e d'ingegni molto nobili in tutte le scienze, ed in qualunque arte preclara ed industriosa." * When we peruse this just and splendid description, we can scarcely persuade ourselves that we are reading of times in which the annals of England and France present us only with a frightful prospect of poverty, barbarity, and ignorance. From the oppressions of illiterate masters, and the sufferings of a brutalized peasantry, it is delightful to turn to the opulent and enlightened states of Italy—to the vast and magnificent cities, the ports, the arsenals, the villas, the museums, the libraries, the marts filled with every article of comfort and luxury, the manufactories swarming with artisans, the Apennines covered with rich cultivation up to their very summits, the Po wafting the harvests of Lombardy to the granaries of Venice, and carrying back the silks of Bengal

* Guicciardini, lib. i.

and the firs of Siberia to the palaces of Milan. With peculiar pleasure, every cultivated mind must repose on the fair, the happy, the glorious Florence—on the halls which rung with the mirth of Pulci—the cell where twinkled the midnight lamp of Politian—the statues on which the young eye of Michael Angelo glared with the frenzy of a kindred inspiration—the gardens in which Lorenzo meditated some sparkling song for the May-day dance of the Etrurian Virgins. Alas, for the beautiful city! Alas, for the wit and the learning, the genius and the love!

"Le donne e, cavalier, gli affanni, gli agi,
Che ne'nvogliav' amore e cortesia,
La dove i cuor' son fatti ei malvagi." †

A time was at hand, when all the seven vials of the Apocalypse were to be poured forth and shaken out over those pleasant countries—a time for slaughter, famine, beggary, infamy, slavery, despair.

In the Italian States, as in many natural bodies, untimely decrepitude was the penalty of precocious maturity. Their early greatness, and their early decline, are principally to be attributed to

† Dante, Purgatorio, xiv.

the same cause—the preponderance which the towns acquired in the political system.

In a community of hunters or of shepherds, every man easily and necessarily becomes a soldier. His ordinary avocations are perfectly compatible with all the duties of military service. However remote may be the expedition on which he is bound, he finds it easy to transport with him the stock from which he derives his subsistence. The whole people is an army; the whole year a march. Such was the state of society which facilitated the gigantic conquests of Attila and Timour.

But a people which subsists by the cultivation of the earth is in a very different situation. The husbandman is bound to the soil on which he labors. A long campaign would be ruinous to him. Still, his pursuits are such as give to his frame both the active and the passive strength necessary to a soldier. Nor do they, at least in the infancy of agricultural science, demand his uninterrupted attention. At particular times of the year he is almost wholly unemployed, and can, without injury to himself, afford the time necessary for a short expedition. Thus, the legions of Rome were supplied during its earlier wars. The season, during which the farms did not require the presence of the

cultivators, sufficed for a short inroad and a battle. These operations, too frequently interrupted to produce decisive results, yet served to keep up among the people a degree of discipline and courage which rendered them, not only secure, but formidable. The archers and billmen of the middle ages, who, with provisions for forty days at their backs, left the fields for the camps, were troops of the same description.

But, when commerce and manufactures begin to flourish, a great change takes place. The sedentary habits of the desk and the loom render the exertions and hardships of war insupportable. The occupations of traders and artisans require their constant presence and attention. In such a community, there is little superfluous time; but there is generally much superfluous money. Some members of the society are, therefore, hired to relieve the rest from a task inconsistent with their habits and engagements.

The history of Greece is, in this, as in many other respects, the best commentary on the history of Italy. Five hundred years before the Christian era, the citizens of the republics round the Ægean Sea formed perhaps the finest militia that ever existed. As wealth and refinement advanced, the

system underwent a gradual alteration. The Ionian States were the first in which commerce and the arts were cultivated,—and the first in which the ancient discipline decayed. Within eighty years after the battle of Platæa, mercenary troops were everywhere plying for battles and sieges. In the time of Demosthenes, it was scarcely possible to persuade or compel the Athenians to enlist for foreign service. The laws of Lycurgus prohibited trade and manufactures. The Spartans, therefore, continued to form a national force, long after their neighbors had begun to hire soldiers. But their military spirit declined with their singular institutions. In the second century, Greece contained only one nation of warriors, the savage highlanders of Ætolia, who were at least ten generations behind their countrymen in civilization and intelligence.

All the causes which produced these effects among the Greeks acted still more strongly on the modern Italians. Instead of a power like Sparta, in its nature warlike, they had among them an ecclesiastical state, in its nature pacific. Where there are numerous slaves, every freeman is induced by the strongest motives to familiarize himself with the use of arms. The commonwealths of Italy did not, like those of Greece, swarm with

thousands of these household enemies. Lastly, the mode in which military operations were conducted during the prosperous times of Italy, was peculiarly unfavorable to the formation of an efficient militia. Men covered with iron from head to foot, armed with ponderous lances, and mounted on horses of the largest breed, were considered as composing the strength of an army. The infantry was regarded as comparatively worthless, and was neglected till it became really so. These tactics maintained their ground for centuries in most parts of Europe. That foot soldiers could withstand the charge of heavy cavalry was thought utterly impossible, till, towards the close of the fifteenth century, the rude mountaineers of Switzerland dissolved the spell, and astounded the most experienced generals, by receiving the dreaded shock on an impenetrable forest of pikes.

The use of the Grecian spear, the Roman sword, or the modern bayonet, might be acquired with comparative ease. But nothing short of the daily exercise of years could train the man at arms to support his ponderous panoply, and manage his unwieldy weapon. Throughout Europe, this most important branch of war became a separate profession. Beyond the Alps, indeed, though a

profession, it was not generally a trade. It was the duty and the amusement of a large class of country gentlemen. It was the service by which they held their lands, and the diversion by which, in the absence of mental resources, they beguiled their leisure. But, in the Northern States of Italy, as we have already remarked, the growing power of the cities, where it had not exterminated this order of men, had completely changed their habits. Here, therefore, the practice of employing mercenaries became universal, at a time when it was almost unknown in other countries.

When war becomes the trade of a separate class, the least dangerous course left to a government is to form that class into a standing army. It is scarcely possible that men can pass their lives in the service of a single state, without feeling some interest in its greatness. Its victories are their victories. Its defeats are their defeats. The contract loses something of its mercantile character. The services of the soldier are considered as the effects of patriotic zeal, his pay as the tribute of national gratitude. To betray the power which employs him, to be even remiss in its service, are in his eyes the most atrocious and degrading of crimes.

When the princes and commonwealths of Italy

began to use hired troops, their wisest course would have been to form separate military establishments. Unhappily this was not done. The mercenary warriors of the Peninsula, instead of being attached to the service of different powers, were regarded as the common property of all. The connection between the state and its defenders was reduced to the most simple and naked traffic. The adventurer brought his horse, his weapons, his strength, and his experience into the market. Whether the King of Naples or the Duke of Milan, the Pope or the Signory of Florence, struck the bargain was to him a matter of perfect indifference. He was for the highest wages and the longest term. When the campaign for which he had contracted was finished, there was neither law nor punctilio to prevent him from instantly turning his arms against his late masters. The soldier was altogether disjointed from the citizen and from the subject.

The natural consequences followed. Left to the conduct of men who neither loved those whom they defended, nor hated those whom they opposed—who were often bound by stronger ties to the army against which they fought than the state which they served—who lost by the termination of the conflict, and gained by its prolongation, war completely

changed its character. Every man came into the field of battle impressed with the knowledge that, in a few days, he might be taking the pay of the power against which he was then employed, and fighting by the side of his enemies against his associates. The strongest interest and the strongest feelings concurred to mitigate the hostility of those who had lately been brethren in arms, and who might soon be brethren in arms once more. Their common profession was a bond of union not to be forgotten, even when they were engaged in the service of contending parties. Hence it was that operations, languid and indecisive beyond any recorded in history, marches and countermarches, pillaging expeditions and blockades, bloodless capitulations and equally bloodless combats, make up the military history of Italy during the course of nearly two centuries. Mighty armies fight from sunrise to sunset. A great victory is won. Thousands of prisoners are taken; and hardly a life is lost! A pitched battle seems to have been really less dangerous than an ordinary civil tumult.

Courage was now no longer necessary even to the military character. Men grew old in camps, and acquired the highest renown by their warlike achievements, without being once required to face

serious danger. The political consequences are too well known. The richest and most enlightened part of the world was left undefended, to the assaults of every barbarous invader—to the brutality of Switzerland, the insolence of France, and the fierce rapacity of Arragon. The moral effects which followed from this state of things were still more remarkable.

Among the rude nations which lay beyond the Alps, valor was absolutely indispensable. Without it none could be eminent; few could be secure. Cowardice was, therefore, naturally considered as the foulest reproach. Among the polished Italians, enriched by commerce, governed by law, and passionately attached to literature, everything was done by superiority of intelligence. Their very wars, more pacific than the peace of their neighbors, required rather civil than military qualifications. Hence, while courage was the point of honor in other countries, ingenuity became the point of honor in Italy.

From these principles were deduced, by processes strictly analogous, two opposite systems of fashionable morality. Through the greater part of Europe, the vices which peculiarly belong to timid dispositions, and which are the natural

defense of weakness, fraud, and hypocrisy, have always been most disreputable. On the other hand, the excesses of haughty and daring spirits have been treated with indulgence, and even with respect. The Italians regarded with corresponding lenity those crimes which require self-command, address, quick observation, fertile invention, and profound knowledge of human nature.

Such a prince as our Henry the Fifth would have been the idol of the North. The follies of his youth, the selfish and desolating ambition of his manhood, the Lollards roasted at slow fires, the prisoners massacred on the field of battle, the expiring lease of priestcraft renewed for another century, the dreadful legacy of a causeless and hopeless war, bequeathed to a people who had no interest in its event, everything is forgotten, but the victory of Agincourt! Francis Sforza, on the other hand, was the model of the Italian hero. He made his employers and his rivals alike his tools. He first overpowered his open enemies by the help of faithless allies; he then armed himself against his allies with the spoils taken from his enemies. By his incomparable dexterity, he raised himself from the precarious and dependent situation of a military adventurer to the first

throne of Italy. To such a man much was forgiven —hollow friendship, ungenerous enmity, violated faith. Such are the opposite errors which men commit, when their morality is not a science but a taste; when they abandon eternal principles for accidental associations.

We have illustrated our meaning by an instance taken from history. We will select another from fiction. Othello murders his wife; he gives orders for the murder of his lieutenant; he ends by murdering himself. Yet he never loses the esteem and affection of a Northern reader—his intrepid and ardent spirit redeeming everything. The unsuspecting confidence with which he listens to his adviser, the agony with which he shrinks from the thought of shame, the tempest of passion with which he commits his crimes, and the haughty fearlessness with which he avows them, give an extraordinary interest to his character. Iago, on the contrary, is the object of universal loathing. Many are inclined to suspect that Shakespeare has been seduced into an exaggeration unusual with him, and has drawn a monster who has no archetype in human nature. Now we suspect, that an Italian audience, in the fifteenth century, would have felt very differently. Othello would have

inspired nothing but detestation and contempt. The folly with which he trusts to the friendly professions of a man whose promotion he had obstructed —the credulity with which he takes unsupported assertions, and trivial circumstances, for unanswerable proofs—the violence with which he silences the exculpation till the exculpation can only aggravate his misery, would have excited the abhorrence and disgust of the spectators. The conduct of Iago they would assuredly have condemned; but they would have condemned it as we condemn that of his victim. Something of interest and respect would have mingled with their disapprobation. The readiness of his wit, the clearness of his judgment, the skill with which he penetrates the dispositions of others and conceals his own, would have insured to him a certain portion of their esteem.

So wide was the difference between the Italians and their neighbors. A similar difference existed between the Greeks of the second century before Christ and their masters the Romans. The conquerors, brave and resolute, faithful to their engagements, and strongly influenced by religious feelings, were, at the same time, ignorant, arbitrary, and cruel. With the vanquished people were de-

posited all the art, the science, and the literature of the Western world. In poetry, in philosophy, in painting, in architecture, in sculpture, they had no rivals. Their manners were polished, their perceptions acute, their invention ready; they were tolerant, affable, humane. But of courage and sincerity they were almost utterly destitute. The rude warriors who had subdued them consoled themselves for their intellectual inferiority, by remarking that knowledge and taste seemed only to make men atheists, cowards, and slaves. The distinction long continued to be strongly marked, and furnished an admirable subject for the fierce sarcasm of Juvenal.

The citizen of an Italian commonwealth was the Greek of the time of Juvenal, and the Greek of the time of Pericles, joined in one. Like the former, he was timid and pliable, artful and unscrupulous. But, like the latter, he had a country. Its independence and prosperity were dear to him. If his character were degraded by some mean crimes, it was, on the other hand, ennobled by public spirit, and by an honorable ambition.

A vice sanctioned by general opinion is merely a vice. The evil terminates in itself. A vice condemned by the general opinion produces a perni-

cious effect on the whole character. The former is a local malady, the latter a constitutional taint. When the reputation of the offender is lost, he too often flings the remains of his virtue after it in despair. The Highland gentleman, who, a century ago, lived by taking blackmail from his neighbors, committed the same crime for which Wild was accompanied to Tyburn by the huzzas of two hundred thousand people. But there can be no doubt that he was a much less depraved man than Wild. The deed for which Mrs. Brownrigg was hanged sinks into nothing, when compared with the conduct of the Roman who treated the public to a hundred pair of gladiators. Yet we should probably wrong such a Roman if we supposed that his disposition was so cruel as that of Mrs. Brownrigg. In our own country, a woman forfeits her place in society, by what, in a man, is too commonly considered as an honorable distinction, and, at worst, as a venial error. The consequence is notorious. The moral principle of a woman is frequently more impaired by a single lapse from virtue, than that of a man by twenty years of intrigue. Classical antiquity would furnish us with instances stronger if possible, than those to which we have referred.

We must apply this principle to the case before us. Habits of dissimulation and falsehood, no doubt, mark a man of our age and country as utterly worthless and abandoned. But it by no means follows that a similar judgment would be just in the case of an Italian of the middle ages. On the contrary, we frequently find those faults, which we are accustomed to consider as certain indications of a mind altogether depraved, in company with great and good qualities, with generosity, with benevolence, with disinterestedness. From such a state of society, Palamedes, in the admirable dialogues of Hume, might have drawn illustrations of his theory as striking as any of those with which Fourli furnished him. These are not, we well know, the lessons which historians are generally most careful to teach, or readers most willing to learn. But they are not, therefore, useless. How Philip disposed his troops at Chæronea, where Hannibal crossed the Alps, whether Mary blew up Darnley, or Siquier shot Charles the Twelfth, and ten thousand other questions of the same description, are in themselves unimportant. The inquiry may amuse us, but the decision leaves us no wiser. He alone reads history aright, who, observing how powerfully circum-

stances influence the feelings and opinions of men, how often vices pass into virtues, and paradoxes into axioms, learns to distinguish what is accidental and transitory in human nature, from what is essential and immutable.

In this respect no history suggests more important reflections than that of the Tuscan and Lombard commonwealths. The character of the Italian statesman seems, at first sight, a collection of contradictions, a phantom, as monstrous as the portress of hell in Milton, half divinity, half snake, majestic and beautiful above, grovelling and poisonous below. We see a man, whose thoughts and words have no connection with each other; who never hesitates at an oath when he wishes to seduce; who never wants a pretext when he is inclined to betray. His cruelties spring, not from the heat of blood, or the insanity of uncontrolled power, but from deep and cool meditation. His passions, like well-trained troops, are impetuous by rule, and in their most headstrong fury never forget the discipline to which they have been accustomed. His whole soul is occupied with vast and complicated schemes of ambition. Yet his aspect and language exhibit nothing but philosophic moderation. Hatred and revenge eat into his heart; yet every look is a

cordial smile, every gesture a familiar caress. He never excites the suspicion of his adversary by petty provocations. His purpose is disclosed only when it is accomplished. His face is unruffled, his speech is courteous, till vigilance is laid asleep, till a vital point is exposed, till a sure aim is taken; and then he strikes—for the first and last time. Military courage, the boast of the sottish German, the frivolous and prating Frenchman, the romantic and arrogant Spaniard, he neither possesses nor values. He shuns danger, not because he is insensible to shame, but because, in the society in which he lives, timidity has ceased to be shameful. To do an injury openly is, in his estimation, as wicked as to do it secretly, and far less profitable. With him the most honorable means are—the surest, the speediest, and the darkest. He cannot comprehend how a man should scruple to deceive him whom he does not scruple to destroy. He would think it madness to declare open hostilities against a rival whom he might stab in a friendly embrace, or poison in a consecrated wafer.

Yet this man, black with the vices which *we* consider as most loathsome—traitor, hypocrite, coward, assassin—was by no means destitute even of those virtues which we generally consider as indi-

cating superior elevation of character. In civil courage, in perseverance, in presence of mind, those barbarous warriors who were foremost in the battle or the breach, were far his inferiors. Even the dangers which he avoided, with a caution almost pusillanimous, never confused his perceptions, never paralyzed his inventive faculties, never wrung out one secret from his ready tongue and his inscrutable brow. Though a dangerous enemy, and a still more dangerous accomplice, he was a just and beneficent ruler. With so much unfairness in his policy, there was an extraordinary degree of fairness in his intellect. Indifferent to truth in the transactions of life, he was honestly devoted to the pursuit of truth in the researches of speculation. Wanton cruelty was not in his nature. On the contrary, where no political object was at stake, his disposition was soft and humane. The susceptibility of his nerves, and the activity of his imagination, inclined him to sympathize with the feelings of others, and to delight in the charities and courtesies of social life. Perpetually descending to actions which might seem to mark a mind diseased through all its faculties, he had nevertheless an exquisite sensibility both for the natural and the moral sublime, for every graceful and every lofty conception.

Habits of petty intrigue and dissimulation might have rendered him incapable of great general views, but that the expanding effect of his philosophical studies counteracted the narrowing tendency. He had the keenest enjoyment of wit, eloquence, and poetry. The fine arts profited alike by the severity of his judgment, and the liberality of his patronage. The portraits of some of the remarkable Italians of those times are perfectly in harmony with this description. Ample and majestic foreheads; brows strong and dark, but not frowning; eyes of which the calm full gaze, while it expresses nothing, seems to discern everything; cheeks pale with thought and sedentary habits; lips formed with feminine delicacy, but compressed with more than masculine decision, mark out men at once enterprising and apprehensive; men equally skilled in detecting the purpose of others, and in concealing their own; men who must have been formidable enemies and unsafe allies; but men, at the same time, whose tempers were mild and equable, and who possessed an amplitude and subtlety of mind, which would have rendered them eminent either in active or in contemplative life, and fitted them either to govern or to instruct mankind.

Every age and every nation has certain characteristic vices, which prevail almost universally, which scarcely any person scruples to avow, and which even rigid moralists but faintly censure. Succeeding generations change the fashion of their morals, with their hats and their coaches; take some other kind of wickedness under their patronage, and wonder at the depravity of their ancestors. Nor is this all. Posterity, that high court of appeal which is never tired of eulogizing its own judgment and discernment, acts, on such occasions, like a Roman dictator after a general mutiny. Finding the delinquents too numerous to be all punished, it selects some of them at hazard, to bear the whole penalty of an offense in which they are not more deeply implicated than those who escape. Whether decimation be a convenient mode of military execution, we know not; but we solemnly protest against the introduction of such a principle into the philosophy of history.

In the present instance, the lot has fallen on Machiavelli: a man whose public conduct was upright and honorable, whose views of morality, where they differed from those of the persons around him, seem to have differed for the better, and whose only fault was, that, having adopted

some of the maxims then generally received, he arranged them more luminously, and expressed them more forcibly, than any other writer.

Having now, we hope, in some degree cleared the personal character of Machiavelli, we come to the consideration of his works. As a poet, he is not entitled to a very high place. The Decennali are merely abstracts of the history of his own times in rhyme. The style and versification are sedulously modeled on those on Dante. But the manner of Dante, like that of every other great original poet, was suited only to his own genius, and to his own subject. The distorted and rugged diction which gives to his unearthly imagery a yet more unearthly character, and seems to proceed from a man laboring to express that which is inexpressible, is at once mean and extravagant when misemployed by an imitator. The moral poems are in every point superior. That on Fortune, in particular, and that on Opportunity, exhibit both justness of thought and fertility of fancy. The Golden Ass has nothing but the name in common with the Romance of Apuleius, a book which, in spite of its irregular plan and its detestable style, is among the most fascinating in the Latin language, and in which the merits of Le Sage

and Radcliffe, Bunyan and Crébillon, are singularly united. The poem of Machiavelli, which is evidently unfinished, is carefully copied from the earlier cantos of the Inferno. The writer loses himself in a wood. He is terrified by monsters, and relieved by a beautiful damsel. His protectress conducts him to a large menagerie of emblematical beasts, whose peculiarities are described at length. The manner as well as the plan of the Divine Comedy is carefully imitated. Whole lines are transferred from it. But they no longer produce their wonted effect. Virgil advises the husbandman who removes a plant from one spot to another to mark its bearings on the cork, and to place it in the same position with regard to the different points of the heaven in which it formerly stood. A similar care is necessary in poetical transplantation. Where it is neglected, we perpetually see the flowers of language, which have bloomed on one soil, wither on another. Yet the Golden Ass is not altogether destitute of merit. There is considerable ingenuity in the allegory, and some vivid coloring in the descriptions.

The comedies deserve more attention. The Mandragola, in particular, is superior to the best of Goldoni, and inferior only to the best of Molière.

It is the work of a man who, if he had devoted himself to the drama, would probably have attained the highest eminence, and produced a permanent and salutary effect on the national taste. This we infer, not so much from the degree, as from the kind of its excellence. There are compositions which indicate still greater talent, and which are perused with still greater delight, from which we should have drawn very different conclusions. Books quite worthless are quite harmless. The sure sign of the general decline of an art is the frequent occurrence, not of deformity, but of misplaced beauty. In general, tragedy is corrupted by eloquence, and comedy by wit.

The real object of the drama is the exhibition of the human character. This, we conceive, is no arbitrary canon, originating in local and temporary associations, like those which regulate the number of acts in a play, or syllables in a line. It is the very essence of a species of composition, in which every idea is colored by passing through the medium of an imagined mind. To this fundamental law every other regulation is subordinate. The situations which most signally develop character form the best plot. The mother tongue of the passions is the best style.

The principle, rightly understood, does not debar the poet from any grace of composition. There is no style in which some man may not, under some circumstances, express himself. There is therefore no style which the drama rejects, none which it does not occasionally require. It is in the discernment of place, of time, and of person, that the inferior artists fail. The brilliant rodomontade of Mercutio, the elaborate declamation of Antony, are, where Shakespeare has placed them, natural and pleasing. But Dryden would have made Mercutio challenge Tybalt, in hyperboles as fanciful as those in which he describes the chariot of Mab.—Corneille would have represented Antony as scolding and coaxing Cleopatra with all the measured rhetoric of a funeral oration.

No writers have injured the Comedy of England so deeply as Congreve and Sheridan. Both were men of splendid wit and polished taste. Unhappily they made all their characters in their own likeness. Their works bear the same relation to the legitimate drama which a transparency bears to a painting; no delicate touches; no hues imperceptibly fading into each other; the whole is lighted up with an universal glare. Outlines and tints are forgotten, in the common blaze which illu-

minates all. The flowers and fruits of the intellect abound; but it is the abundance of a jungle, not of a garden—unwholesome, bewildering, unprofitable from its very plenty, rank from its very fragrance. Every fop, every bore, every valet is a man of wit. The very butts and dupes, Tattle, Urkwould, Puff, Acres, outshine the whole Hôtel de Rambouillet. To prove the whole system of this school absurd, it is only necessary to apply the test which dissolved the enchanted Florimel—to place the true by the false Thalia, to contrast the most celebrated characters which have been drawn by the writers of whom we speak, with the Bustard in King John, or the Nurse in Romeo and Juliet. It is not surely from want of wit that Shakespeare adopted so different a manner. Benedick and Beatrice throw Mirable and Millamont into the shade. All the good sayings of the facetious hours of Absolute and Surface might have been clipped from the single character of Falstaff without being missed. It would have been easy for that fertile mind to have given Bardolph and Shallow as much wit as Prince Hal, and to have made Dogberry and Verges retort on each other in sparkling epigrams. But he knew, to use his own admirable language, that such indiscriminate

prodigality was "*from* the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was, and is, to hold, as it were, the mirror up to Nature."

This digression will enable our readers to understand what we mean when we say that, in the Mandragola, Machiavelli has proved that he completely understood the nature of the dramatic art, and possessed talents which would have enabled him to excel in it. By the correct and vigorous delineation of human nature, it produces interest without a pleasing or skillful plot, and laughter without the least ambition of wit. The lover, not a very delicate or generous lover, and his adviser the parasite, are drawn with spirit. The hypocritical confessor is an admirable portrait. He is, if we mistake not, the original of Father Dominic, the best comic character of Dryden. But old Nicias is the glory of the piece. We cannot call to mind anything that resembles him. The follies which Molière ridicules are those of affection, not those of fatuity. Coxcombs and pedants, not simpletons, are his game. Shakespeare has indeed a vast assortment of fools; but the precise species of which we speak is not, if we remember right, to be found there. Shallow is a fool. But his animal spirits supply, to a certain

degree, the place of cleverness. His talk is to that of Sir John what soda-water is to champagne. It has the effervescence, though not the body or the flavor. Slender and Sir Andrew Aguecheek are fools, troubled with an uneasy consciousness of their folly, which, in the latter, produces a most edifying meekness and docility, and in the former, awkwardness, obstinacy, and confusion. Cloten is an arrogant fool, Osric a foppish fool, Ajax a savage fool; but Nicias is, as Thersites says of Patroclus, a fool positive. His mind is occupied by no strong feeling; it takes every character, and retains none; its aspect is diversified, not by passions, but by faint and transitory semblances of passion, a mock joy, a mock fear, a mock love, a mock pride, which chase each other like shadows over its surface, and vanish as soon as they appear. He is just idiot enough to be an object, not of pity or horror, but of ridicule. He bears some resemblance to poor Calandrino, whose mishaps, as recounted by Boccaccio, have made all Europe merry for more than four centuries. He perhaps resembles still more closely Simon de Vila, to whom Bruno and Buffalmacco promised the love of the Countess Civillari.* Nicias is, like Simon, of a

* Decameron, Giorn. viii. Nov. 9.

learned profession; and the dignity with which he wears the doctoral fur renders his absurdities infinitely more grotesque. The old Tuscan is the very language for such a being. Its peculiar simplicity gives even to the most forcible reasoning and the most brilliant wit an infantine air, generally delightful, but to a foreign reader sometimes a little ludicrous. Heroes and statesmen seem to lisp when they use it. It becomes Nicias incomparably, and renders all his silliness infinitely more silly.

We may add, that the verses, with which the Mandragola is interspersed, appear to us to be the most spirited and correct of all that Machiavelli has written in meter. He seems to have entertained the same opinion; for he has introduced some of them in other places. The contemporaries of the author were not blind to the merits of this striking piece. It was acted in Florence with the greatest success. Leo the Tenth was among its admirers, and by his order it was represented at Rome.†

The Clizia is an imitation of the Casina of Plautus, which is itself an imitation of the lost Κληρούμενοι of Diphilus. Plautus was, unques-

† Nothing can be more evident than that Paulus Jovius designates the Mandragola under the name of the Nicias. We should not have noticed what is so perfectly obvious, were it not that this natural and palpable misnomer has led the sagacious and industrious Bayle into a gross error.

tionably, one of the best Latin writers. His works are copies; but they have in an extraordinary degree the air of originals. We infinitely prefer the slovenly exuberance of his fancy, and the clumsy vigor of his dictation, to the artfully disguised poverty and elegant languor of Terence. But the Casina is by no means one of his best plays; nor is it one which offers great facilities to an imitator. The story is as alien from modern habits of life, as the manner in which it is developed from the modern fashion of composition. The lover remains in the country, and the heroine is locked up in her chamber during the whole action, leaving their fate to be decided by a foolish father, a cunning mother, and two knavish servants. Machiavelli has executed his task with judgment and taste. He has accommodated the plot to a different state of society, and has very dexterously connected it with the history of his own times. The relation of the trick put on the doating old lover is exquisitely humorous. It is far superior to the corresponding passage in the Latin comedy, and scarcely yields to the account which Falstaff gives of his ducking.

Two other comedies, without titles, the one in prose, the other in verse, appear among the works of Machiavelli. The former is very short, lively

enough, but of no great value. The latter we can scarcely believe to be genuine. Neither its merits nor its defects remind us of the reputed author. It was first printed in 1796, from a manuscript discovered in the celebrated library of the Strozzi. Its genuineness, if we have been rightly informed, is established solely by the comparison of hands. Our suspicions are strengthened by the circumstance, that the same manuscript contained a description of the plague of 1527, which has also, in consequence, been added to the works of Machiavelli. Of this last composition the strongest external evidence would scarcely induce us to believe him guilty. Nothing was ever written more detestable, in matter and manner. The narrations, the reflections, the jokes, the lamentations, are all the very worst of their respective kinds, at once trite and affected—threadbare tinsel from the Rag-fairs and Monmouth-streets of literature. A foolish school-boy might perhaps write it, and, after he had written it, think it much finer than the incomparable introduction of the Decameron. But that a shrewd statesman, whose earliest works are characterized by manliness of thought and language, should, at nearly sixty years of age, descend to such puerility, is utterly inconceivable.

The little Novel of Belphegor is pleasantly conceived and pleasantly told. But the extravagance of the satire in some measure injures its effect. Machiavelli was unhappily married; and his wish to avenge his own cause and that of his brethren in misfortune, carried him beyond even the license of fiction. Jonson seems to have combined some hints taken from this tale with others from Boccaccio, in the plot of The Devil is an Ass—a play which, though not the most highly finished of his compositions, is perhaps that which exhibits the strongest proofs of genius.

The political correspondence of Machiavelli, first published in 1767, is unquestionably genuine and highly valuable. The unhappy circumstances in which his country was placed, during the greater part of his public life, gave extraordinary encouragement to diplomatic talents. From the moment that Charles the Eighth descended from the Alps, the whole character of Italian politics was changed. The governments of the Peninsula ceased to form an independent system. Drawn from their old orbit by the attraction of the larger bodies which now approached them, they became mere satellites of France and Spain. All their disputes, internal and external, were decided by foreign influence.

The contests of opposite factions were carried on, not as formerly in the senate-house or in the market-place, but in the antechambers of Louis and Ferdinand. Under these circumstances, the prosperity of the Italian States depended far more on the ability of their foreign agents than on the conduct of those who were intrusted with the domestic administration. The ambassador had to discharge functions far more delicate than transmitting orders of knighthood, introducing tourists, or presenting his brethren with the homage of his high consideration. He was an advocate, to whose management the dearest interests of his clients were intrusted; a spy, clothed with an inviolable character. Instead of consulting the dignity of those whom he represented by a reserved manner and an ambiguous style, he was to plunge into all the intrigues of the court at which he resided, to discover and flatter every weakness of the prince who governed his employers, of the favorites who governed the prince, and of the lacquey who governed the favorite. He was to compliment the mistress and bribe the confessor, to panegyrize or supplicate, to laugh or weep, to accommodate himself to every caprice, to lull every suspicion, to treasure every hint, to be everything, to observe every-

thing, to endure everything. High as the art of political intrigue had been carried in Italy, these were times which required it all.

On these arduous errands Machiavelli was frequently employed. He was sent to treat with the King of the Romans and with the Duke of Valentinois. He was twice ambassador at the court of Rome, and thrice at that of France. In these missions, and in several others of inferior importance, he acquitted himself with great dexterity. His despatches form one of the most amusing and instructive collections extant. We meet with none of the mysterious jargon so common in modern state-papers, the flash-language of political robbers and sharpers. The narratives are clear and agreeably written; the remarks on men and things clever and judicious. The conversations are reported in a spirited and characteristic manner. We find ourselves introduced into the presence of the men who, during twenty eventful years swayed the destinies of Europe. Their wit and their folly, their fretfulness and their merriment are exposed to us. We are admitted to overhear their chat, and to watch their familiar gestures. It is interesting and curious to recognize, in circumstances which elude the notice of historians, the feeble vio-

lence and shallow cunning of Louis the Twelfth; the bustling insignificance of Maximilian, cursed with an impotent pruriency for renown, rash, yet timid, obstinate yet fickle, always in a hurry, yet always too late;—the fierce and haughty energy which gave dignity to the eccentricities of Julius; —the soft and graceful manners which masked the insatiable ambition and the implacable hatred of Borgia.

We have mentioned Borgia. It is impossible not to pause for a moment on the name of a man, in whom the political morality of Italy was so strongly personified, partially blended with the sterner lineaments of the Spanish character. On two important occasions Machiavelli was admitted to his society; once, at the moment when his splendid villainy achieved its most signal triumph, when it caught in one snare and crushed at one blow all his most formidable rivals, and again when, exhausted by disease, and overwhelmed by misfortunes, which no human prudence could have averted, he was the prisoner of the deadliest enemy of his house. These interviews, between the greatest speculative and the greatest practical statesmen of the age, are fully described in the correspondence, and form perhaps the most inter-

esting part of it. From some passages in the *Prince*, and perhaps also from some indistinct traditions, several writers have supposed a connection between those remarkable men much closer than ever existed. The envoy has even been accused of promoting the crimes of the artful and merciless tyrant. But from the official documents it is clear that their intercourse, though ostensibly amicable, was in reality hostile. It cannot be doubted, however, that the imagination of Machiavelli was strongly impressed and his speculations on government colored, by the observations which he made on the singular character, and equally singular fortunes, of a man who, under such disadvantages, had achieved such exploits, who, when sensuality, varied through innumerable forms, could no longer stimulate his sated mind, found a more powerful and durable excitement in the intense thirst of empire and revenge;—who emerged from the sloth and luxury of the Roman purple, the first prince and general of the age;—who, trained in an unwarlike profession, formed a gallant army out of the dregs of an unwarlike people;—who, after acquiring sovereignty by destroying his enemies, acquired popularity by destroying his tools;—who had begun to employ for the most salutary

ends the power which he had attained by the most atrocious means; who tolerated within the sphere of his iron despotism no plunderer or oppressor but himself;—and who fell at last amidst the mingled curses and regrets of a people of whom his genius has been the wonder, and might have been the salvation. Some of those crimes of Borgia, which to us appear the most odious, would not, from causes which we have already considered, have struck an Italian of the fifteenth century with equal horror. Patriotic feeling also might induce Machiavelli to look, with some indulgence and regret, on the memory of the only leader who could have defended the independence of Italy against the confederate spoilers of Cambray.

On this subject, Machiavelli felt most strongly. Indeed, the expulsion of the foreign tyrants, and the restoration of that golden age which had preceded the irruption of Charles the Eighth, were projects which, at that time, fascinated all the master-spirits of Italy. The magnificent vision delighted the great but ill-regulated mind of Julius. It divided with manuscripts and sauces, painters and falcons, the attention of the frivolous Leo. It prompted the generous treason of Morone. It imparted a transient energy to the feeble mind and

body of the last Sforza. It excited for one moment an honest ambition in the false heart of Pescara. Ferocity and insolence were not among the vices of the national character. To the discriminating cruelties of politicians, committed for great ends on select victims, the moral code of the Italians was too indulgent. But though they might have recourse to barbarity as an expedient, they did not require it as a stimulant. They turned with loathing from the atrocity of the strangers who seemed to love blood for its own sake, who, not content with subjugating, were impatient to destroy; who found a fiendish pleasure in razing magnificent cities, cutting the throats of enemies who cried for quarter, or suffocating an unarmed people by thousands in the caverns to which they had fled for safety. Such were the scenes which daily excited the terror and disgust of a people, amongst whom, till lately, the worst that a soldier had to fear in a pitched battle was the loss of his horse, and the expense of his ransom. The swinish intemperance of Switzerland, the wolfish avarice of Spain, the gross licentiousness of the French, indulged in violation of hospitality, of decency, of love itself, the wanton inhumanity which was common to all the invaders, had rendered them subjects of deadly

hatred to the inhabitants of the Peninsula.* The wealth which had been accumulated during centuries of prosperity and repose was rapidly melting away. The intellectual superiority of the oppressed people only rendered them more keenly sensible of their political degradation. Literature and taste, indeed, still disguised, with a flush of hectic loveliness and brilliancy, the ravages of an incurable decay. The iron had not yet entered into the soul. The time was not yet come when eloquence was to be gagged and reason to be hoodwinked—when the harp of the poet was to be hung on the willows of Arno, and the right hand of the painter to forget its cunning. Yet a discerning eye might even then have seen that genius and learning would not long survive the state of things from which they had sprung;—that the great men whose talents gave lustre to that melancholy period had been formed under the influence of happier days, and would leave no successors behind them. The times which shine with the greatest splendor in literary history are not always those to which the human mind is most indebted. Of this we may be

* The opening stanzas of the Fourteenth Canto of the Orlando Furioso give a frightful picture of the state of Italy in those times. Yet, strange to say, Ariosto is speaking of the conduct of those who called themselves allies.

convinced, by comparing the generation which follows them with that which preceded them. The first fruits which are reaped under a bad system often spring from seed sown under a good one. Thus it was, in some measure, with the Augustan age. Thus it was with the age of Raphael and Ariosto, of Aldus and Vida.

Machiavelli deeply regretted the misfortunes of his country, and clearly discerned the cause and the remedy. It was the military system of the Italian people which had extinguished their valor and discipline, and rendered their wealth an easy prey to every foreign plunderer. The secretary projected a scheme alike honorable to his heart and to his intellect, for abolishing the use of mercenary troops, and organizing a national militia.

The exertions which he made to effect this great object ought alone to rescue his name from obloquy. Though his situation and his habits were pacific, he studied with intense assiduity the theory of war. He made himself master of all its details. The Florentine government entered into his views. A council of war was appointed. Levies were decreed. The indefatigable minister flew from place to place in order to superintend the execution of his design. The times were, in some respects, fa-

vorable to the experiment. The system of military tactics had undergone a great revolution. The cavalry was no longer considered as forming the strength of an army. The hours which a citizen could spare from his ordinary employments, though by no means sufficient to familiarize him with the exercise of a man-at-arms, might render him an useful foot-soldier. The dread of a foreign yoke, of plunder, of massacre, and conflagration, might have conquered that repugnance to military pursuits, which both the industry and the idleness of great towns commonly generate. For a time the scheme promised well. The new troops acquitted themselves respectably in the field. Machiavelli looked with parental rapture on the success of his plan; and began to hope that the arms of Italy might once more be formidable to the barbarians of the Tagus and the Rhine. But the tide of misfortune came on before the barriers which should have withstood it were prepared. For a time, indeed, Florence might be considered as peculiarly fortunate. Famine and sword and pestilence had devastated the fertile plains and stately cities of the Po. All the curses denounced of old against Tyre seemed to have fallen on Venice. Her merchants already stood afar off, lamenting for their great

city. The time seemed near when the sea-weed should overgrow her silent Rialto, and the fisherman wash his nets in her deserted arsenal. Naples had been four times conquered and reconquered, by tyrants equally indifferent to its welfare, and equally greedy for its spoils. Florence, as yet, had only to endure degradation and extortion, to submit to the mandates of foreign powers, to buy over and over again, at an enormous price, what was already justly her own, to return thanks for being wronged, and to ask pardon for being in the right. She was at length deprived of the blessings even of this infamous and servile repose. Her military and political institutions were swept away together. The Medici returned, in the train of foreign invaders, from their long exile. The policy of Machiavelli was abandoned; and his public services were requited with poverty, imprisonment, and torture.

The fallen statesman still clung to his project with unabated ardor. With the view of vindicating it from some popular objections, and of refuting some prevailing errors on the subject of military science, he wrote his seven books on the Art of War. This excellent work is in the form of a dialogue. The opinions of the writer are put into the mouth of Fabrizio Colonna, a powerful noble-

man of the Ecclesiastical State, and an officer of distinguished merit in the service of the King of Spain. He visits Florence on his way from Lombardy to his own domains. He is invited to meet some friends at the house of Cosimo Rucellui, an amiable and accomplished young man, whose early death Machiavelli feelingly deplores. After partaking of an elegant entertainment, they retire from the heat into the most shady recesses of the garden. Fabrizio is struck by the sight of some uncommon plants. His host informs him that, though rare in modern days, they are frequently mentioned by the classical authors, and that his grandfather, like many other Italians, amused himself with practising the ancient methods of gardening. Fabrizio expresses his regret that those who, in later times affected the manners of the old Romans, should select for imitation their most trifling pursuits. This leads to a conversation on the decline of military discipline, and on the best means of restoring it. The institution of the Florentine militia is ably defended; and several improvements are suggested in the details.

The Swiss and the Spaniards were, at that time, regarded as the best soldiers in Europe. The Swiss battalion consisted of pikemen, and bore a close

resemblance to the Greek phalanx. The Spaniards, like the soldiers of Rome, were armed with the sword and the shield. The victories of Flaminius and Æmilius over the Macedonian kings seem to prove the superiority of the weapons used by the legions.

The same experiments had been recently tried with the same result at the battle of Ravenna, one of those tremendous days into which human folly and wickedness compress the whole devastation of a famine or a plague. In that memorable conflict, the infantry of Arragon, the old companions of Gonsalvo, deserted by all their allies, hewed a passage through the thickest of the imperial pikes, and effected an unbroken retreat in the face of the gendarmerie of De Foix, and the renowned artillery of Este. Fabrizio, or rather Machiavelli, proposes to combine the two systems, to arm the foremost lines with the pike, for the purpose of repulsing cavalry, and those in the rear with the sword, as being a weapon better adapted for every purpose. Throughout the work, the author expresses the highest admiration of the military science of the ancient Romans, and the greatest contempt for the maxims which had been in vogue amongst the Italian commanders of the preceding generation.

He prefers infantry to cavalry; and fortified camps to fortified towns. He is inclined to substitute rapid movements, and decisive engagements, for the languid and dilatory operations of his countrymen. He attaches very little importance to the invention of gunpowder. Indeed, he seems to think that it ought scarcely to produce any change in the mode of arming or of disposing troops. The general testimony of historians, it must be allowed, seems to prove that the ill-constructed and ill-served artillery of those times, though useful in a siege, was of little value on the field of battle.

Of the tactics of Machiavelli we will not venture to give an opinion; but we are certain that his book is most able and interesting. As a commentary on the history of his times it is invaluable. The ingenuity, the grace, and the perspicuity of the style, and the eloquence and animation of particular passages, must give pleasure even to readers who take no interest in the subject.

The *Prince* and the *Discourses* on Livy were written after the fall of the republican government. The former was dedicated to the young Lorenzo de Medici. This circumstance seems to have disgusted the contemporaries of the writer far more than the doctrines which have rendered

the name of the work odious in later times. It was considered as an indication of political apostasy. The fact, however, seems to have been that Machiavelli, despairing of *the liberty* of Florence, was inclined to support any government which might preserve her *independence.* The interval which separated a democracy and a despotism, Soderini and Lorenzo, seemed to vanish when compared with the difference between the former and the present state of Italy; between the security, the opulence, and the repose which it had enjoyed under its native rulers, and the misery in which it had been plunged since the fatal year in which the first foreign tyrant had descended from the Alps. The noble and pathetic exhortation with which the *Prince* concludes, shows how strongly the writer felt upon this subject.

The *Prince* traces the progress of an ambitious man, the *Discourses* the progress of an ambitious people. The same principles on which in the former work the elevation of an individual are explained, are applied in the latter to the longer duration and more complex interests of society. To a modern statesman, the form of the Discourses may appear to be puerile. In truth, Livy is not a historian on whom much reliance can be placed,

even in cases where he must have possessed considerable means of information. And his first Decade, to which Machiavelli has confined himself, is scarcely entitled to more credit than our chronicle of British kings who reigned before the Roman invasion. But his commentator is indebted to him for little more than a few texts, which he might as easily have extracted from the Vulgate or the Decameron. The whole train of thought is original.

On the peculiar immorality which has rendered the *Prince* unpopular, and which is almost equally discernible in the *Discourses*, we have already given our opinion at length. We have attempted to show that it belonged rather to the age than the man; that it was a partial taint, and by no means implied general depravity. We cannot, however, deny that it is a great blemish, and that it considerably diminishes the pleasure which, in other respects, those works must afford to every intelligent mind.

It is, indeed, impossible to conceive a more healthful and vigorous constitution of the understanding than that which these works indicate. The qualities of the active and the contemplative statesman appear to have been blended, in the mind of the writer, into a rare and exquisite harmony. His

skill in the details of business had not been acquired at the expense of his general powers. It had not rendered his mind less comprehensive, but it had served to correct his speculations, and to impart to them that vivid and practical character which so widely distinguishes them from the vague theories of most political philosophers.

Every man who has seen the world knows that nothing is so useless as a general maxim. If it be very moral and very true, it may serve for a copy to a charity-boy. If, like those of Rochefoucauld, it be sparkling and whimsical, it may make an excellent motto for an essay. But few, indeed, of the many wise apothegms which have been uttered, from the time of the Seven Sages of Greece to that of Poor Richard, have prevented a single foolish action. We give the highest and the most peculiar praise to the precepts of Machiavelli, when we say that they may frequently be of real use in regulating the conduct, not so much because they are more just or more profound than those which might be culled from other authors, as because they can be more readily applied to the problems of real life.

There are errors in these works. But they are errors which a writer situated like Machiavelli

could scarcely avoid. They arise, for the most part, from a single defect which appears to us to pervade his whole system. In his political scheme the means had been more deeply considered than the ends. The great principle, that societies and laws exist only for the purpose of increasing the sum of private happiness, is not recognized with sufficient clearness. The good of the body, distinct from the good of the members, and sometimes hardly compatible with it, seems to be the object which he proposes to himself. Of all political fallacies, this has had the widest and the most mischievous operation. The state of society in the little commonwealths of Greece, the close connection and mutual dependence of the citizens, and the severity of the laws of war, tended to encourage an opinion which, under such circumstances, could hardly be called erroneous. The interests of every individual were inseparably bound up with those of the state. An invasion destroyed his cornfields and vineyards, drove him from his home, and compelled him to encounter all the hardships of a military life. A peace restored him to security and comfort. A victory doubled the number of his slaves. A defeat perhaps made him a slave himself. When Pericles, in the Peloponnesian war,

told the Athenians that if their country triumphed, their private losses would speedily be repaired, but that if their arms failed of success, every individual amongst them would probably be ruined,* he spoke no more than the truth. He spoke to men whom the tribute of vanquished cities supplied with food and clothing, with the luxury of the bath and the amusements of the theater, on whom the greatness of their country conferred rank, and before whom the members of less prosperous communities trembled; and to men who, in case of a change in the public fortunes, would at least be deprived of every comfort and every distinction which they enjoyed. To be butchered on the smoking ruins of their city, to be dragged in chains to a slave-market, to see one child torn from them to dig in the quarries of Sicily, and another to guard the harems of Persepolis; those were the frequent and probable consequences of national calamities. Hence, among the Greeks, patriotism became a governing principle, or rather an ungovernable passion. Both their legislators and their philosophers took it for granted that, in providing for the strength and greatness of the state, they sufficiently provided for the happiness of the people. The writers of

* Thucydides, ii. 62.

the Roman empire lived under despots into whose dominion a hundred nations were melted down, and whose gardens would have covered the little commonwealths of Phlius and Platæa. Yet they continued to employ the same language, and to cant about the duty of sacrificing everything to a country to which they owed nothing.

Causes similar to those which had influenced the disposition of the Greeks, operated powerfully on the less vigorous and daring character of the Italians. They, too, were members of small communities. Every man was deeply interested in the welfare of the society to which he belonged—a partaker in its wealth and its poverty, in its glory and its shame. In the age of Machiavelli, this was peculiarly the case. Public events had produced an immense sum of money to private citizens. The Northern invaders had brought want to their boards, infamy to their beds, fire to their roofs, and the knife to their throats. It was natural that a man who lived in times like these should overrate the importance of those measures by which a nation is rendered formidable to its neighbors, and undervalue those which make it prosperous within itself.

Nothing is more remarkable in the political

treatises of Machiavelli than the fairness of mind which they indicate. It appears where the author is in the wrong almost as strongly as where he is in the right. He never advances a false opinion because it is new or splendid, because he can clothe it in a happy phrase or defend it by an ingenious sophism. His errors are at once explained by a reference to the circumstances in which he was placed. They evidently were not sought out; they lay in his way, and could scarcely be avoided. Such mistakes must necessarily be committed by early speculators in every science.

In this respect it is amusing to compare the *Prince* and the *Discourses* with the Spirit of Laws. Montesquieu enjoys, perhaps, a wider celebrity than any political writer of modern Europe. Something he doubtless owes to his merit, but much more to his fortune. He had the good luck of a valentine. He caught the eye of the French nation at the moment when it was waking from the long sleep of political and religious bigotry; and in consequence he became a favorite. The English at that time considered a Frenchman who talked about constitutional checks and fundamental laws, as a prodigy not less astonishing than the learned pig or the musical infant. Specious but shallow, stu-

dious of effect, indifferent to truth, eager to build a system, but careless of collecting those materials out of which alone a sound and durable system can be built, he constructed theories as rapidly and as slightly as card-houses—no sooner projected than completed—no sooner completed than blown away—no sooner blown away than forgotten. Machiavelli errs only because his experience, acquired in a very peculiar state of society, could not always enable him to calculate the effect of institutions differing from those of which he had observed the operation. Montesquieu errs because he has a fine thing to say and is resolved to say it. If the phenomena which lie before him will not suit his purpose, all history must be ransacked. If nothing established by authentic testimony can be raked or chipped to suit his Procrustean hypothesis, he puts up with some monstrous fable about Siam, or Bantam, or Japan, told by writers, compared with whom Lucian and Gulliver were veracious—liars by a double right, as travelers and as Jesuits.

Propriety of thought and propriety of diction are commonly found together. Obscurity and affectation are the two greatest faults of style. Obscurity of expression generally springs from confusion of

ideas; and the same wish to dazzle, at any cost, which produces affectation in the manner of a writer, is likely to produce sophistry in his reasonings. The judicious and candid mind of Machiavelli shows itself in his luminous, manly, and polished language. The style of Montesquieu, on the other hand, indicates in every page a lively and ingenious, but an unsound mind. Every trick of expression, from the mysterious conciseness of an oracle to the flippancy of a Parisian coxcomb, is employed to disguise the fallacy of some positions, and the triteness of others. Absurdities are brightened into epigrams; truisms are darkened into enigmas. It is with difficulty that the strongest eye can sustain the glare with which some parts are illuminated, or penetrate the shade in which others are concealed.

The political works of Machiavelli derive a peculiar interest from the mournful earnestness which he manifests, whenever he touches on topics connected with the calamities of his native land. It is difficult to conceive any situation more painful than that of a great man condemned to watch the lingering agony of an exhausted country, to tend it during the alternate fits of stupefaction and raving which precedes its dissolution, to see the

symptoms of vitality disappear one by one, till nothing is left but coldness, darkness, and corruption. To this joyless and thankless duty was Machiavelli called. In the energetic language of the prophet, he was "mad for the sight of his eyes which he saw,"—disunion in the council, effeminacy in the camp, liberty extinguished, commerce decaying, national honor sullied, an enlightened and flourishing people given over to the ferocity of ignorant savages. Though his opinions had not escaped the contagion of that political immorality which was common among his countrymen, his natural disposition seems to have been rather stern and impetuous than pliant and artful. When the misery and degradation of Florence and the foul outrage which he had himself sustained roused his mind, the smooth craft of his profession and his nation is exchanged for the honest bitterness of scorn and anger. He speaks like one sick of the calamitous times and abject people among whom his lot is cast. He pines for the strength and glory of ancient Rome, for the fasces of Brutus and the sword of Scipio, the gravity of the curule chair, and the bloody pomp of the triumphal sacrifice. He seems to be transported back to the days when eight hundred thousand Italian warriors sprung to

arms at the rumor of a Gallic invasion. He breathes all the spirit of those intrepid and haughty patricians, who forgot the dearest ties of nature in the claims of public duty, who looked with disdain on the elephants and on the gold of Pyrrhus, and listened with unaltered composure to the tremendous tidings of Cannæ. Like an ancient temple deformed by the barbarous architecture of a later age, his character acquires an interest from the very circumstances which debase it. The original proportions are rendered more striking, by the contrast which they present to the mean and incongruous additions.

The influence of the sentiments which we have described was not apparent in his writings alone. His enthusiasm, barred from the career which it would have selected for itself, seems to have found a vent in desperate levity. He enjoyed a vindictive pleasure in outraging the opinions of a society which he despised. He became careless of those decencies which were expected from a man so highly distinguished in the literary and political world. The sarcastic bitterness of his conversation disgusted those who were more inclined to accuse his licentiousness than their own degeneracy, and who were unable to conceive the strength of those

emotions which are concealed by the jests of the wretched and by the follies of the wise.

The historical works of Machiavelli still remain to be considered. The life of Castruccio Castracani will occupy us for a very short time, and would scarcely have demanded our notice, had it not attracted a much greater share of public attention than it deserves. Few books, indeed, could be more interesting than a careful and judicious account, from such a pen, of the illustrious Prince of Lucca, the most eminent of those Italian chiefs, who, like Pisistratus and Gelon, acquired a power felt rather than seen, and resting, not on law or on prescription, but on the public favor and on their great personal qualities. Such a work would exhibit to us the real nature of that species of sovereignty, so singular and so often misunderstood, which the Greeks denominated *tyranny*, and which modified in some degree by the feudal system, reappeared in the commonwealths of Lombardy and Tuscany. But this little composition of Machiavelli is in no sense a history. It has no pretensions to fidelity. It is a trifle, and not a very successful trifle. It is scarcely more authentic than the novel of Belphegor, and is very much duller.

The last great work of this illustrious man was

the history of his native city. It was written by the command of the Pope, who, as chief of the house of Medici, was at that time sovereign of Florence. The characters of Cosmo, of Piero, and of Lorenzo, are, however, treated with a freedom and impartiality equally honorable to the writer and to the patron. The miseries and humiliations of dependence, the bread which is more bitter than every other food, the stairs which are more painful than every other ascent * had not broken the spirit of Machiavelli. The most corrupting post in a corrupting profession had not depraved the generous heart of Clement.

The history does not appear to be the fruit of much industry or research. It is unquestionably inaccurate. But it is elegant, lively, and picturesque, beyond any other in the Italian language. The reader, we believe, carries away from it a more vivid and a more faithful impression of the national character and manners, than from more correct accounts. The truth is, that the book belongs rather to ancient than to modern literature. It is in the style, not of Davila and Clarendon, but of Herodotus and Tacitus; and the classical histories may almost be called romances founded in fact.

* Dante, Paradiso, canto xvii.

The relation is, no doubt, in all its principal points, strictly true. But the numerous little incidents which heighten the interest, the words, the gestures, the looks, are evidently furnished by the imagination of the author. The fashion of later times is different. A more exact narrative is given by the writer. It may be doubted whether more exact notions are conveyed to the reader. The best portraits are those in which there is a slight mixture of caricature; and we are not aware that the best histories are not those in which a little of the exaggeration of fictitious narrative is judiciously employed. Something is lost in accuracy; but much is gained in effect. The fainter lines are neglected; but the great characteristic features are imprinted on the mind forever.

The history terminates with the death of Lorenzo de Medici. Machiavelli had, it seems, intended to continue it to a later period. But his death prevented the execution of his design; and the melancholy task of recording the desolation and shame of Italy devolved on Guicciardini.

Machiavelli lived long enough to see the commencement of the last struggle for Florentine liberty. Soon after his death, monarchy was finally established—not such a monarchy as that of

which Cosmo had laid the foundations deep in the constitution and feelings of his countrymen, and which Lorenzo had embellished with the trophies of every science and every art; but a loathsome tyranny, proud and mean, cruel and feeble, bigoted and lascivious. The character of Machiavelli was hateful to the new masters of Italy; and those parts of his theory which were in strict accordance with their own daily practice, afforded a pretext for blackening his memory. His works were misrepresented by the learned, misconstrued by the ignorant, censured by the church, abused, with all the rancor of simulated virtue, by the minions of a base despotism, and the priests of a baser superstition. The name of the man whose genius had illuminated all the dark places of policy, and to whose patriotic wisdom an oppressed people had owed their last chance of emancipation and revenge, passed into a proverb of infamy.

For more than two hundred years his bones lay undistinguished. At length, an English nobleman paid the last honors to the greatest statesman of Florence. In the church of Saint Croce, a monument was erected to his memory, which is contemplated with reverence by all who can distinguish the virtues of a great mind through the corruptions

of a degenerate age; and which will be approached with still deeper homage, when the object to which his public life was devoted shall be attained, when the foreign yoke shall be broken, when a second Proccita shall avenge the wrongs of Naples, when a happier Rienzi shall restore the good estate of Rome, when the streets of Florence and Bologna shall again resound with their ancient war cry—*Popolo; popolo; muoiano i tiranni!*

MANDRAGOLA

INTERLOCUTORS

Callimaco
Siro
Messer Nicia
Ligurio
Sostrata
Brother Timoteo
A Lady
Lucrezia

SONG

Sung by Nymphs and Shepherds.

Since life is short and the woes are many
That all who live and breathe must fear
We go passing the years, consuming them
Against our wills.
We know the deceit of the world, the ills
That mortals all must bear.

To flee this sorrow we have chosen
A solitary life; in joys
And festival always we are,
Happy nymphs and laughing boys.
We come here now
With this our harmony
Only to honor this bright day
And this sweet company.

Now once again hath brought us here
The name of him who governs you,
In whom we see all good appear,
In whom the eternal virtues shine.

For such a grace divine,
For such a happy state,
Joy is your due!
Rejoice, thank him who them has given you.

PROLOGUE

God save you, worthy listeners. Since it is clear that your graciousness depends on our pleasing you, we wish, if you will be so kind as not to make a noise, that you may hear a new case born on this earth of ours. You see this apparatus that is shown you here. This is your Florence. Another time it will be Rome or Pisa, and that's enough itself to make you split your jaws with laughter. The door that you see here on the right is the house of the doctor, who is much studied in the law: that street there crammed into the corner is the Street of Love, where he who falls will never rise again. You will recognize by his friar's habit the prior who belongs in the church there opposite, if you do not go away too soon.

A young gentleman, Callimaco by name, new come from Paris, lives at that door on the left. He among all the other worthy gentlemen, by his carriage and sweet ways, must take the prize for gentleness. A lady young and lovely was greatly loved by him and by him deceived, as you shall hear;

and I should like it well if you too were deceived like her.

The tale is called Mandragola: the argument, I fancy, you will see in the playing of it. The author is of little fame: but if you will not laugh at him, he'll gladly stand for the wine. A lover with weak hams, a doctor of little wit, an evil-living friar, a malicious parasite, let them for this day be your entertainment.

And if this matter—wishing only to be light-hearted—be not worthy of a man who wishes to seem wise and grave, make this excuse for it, that it only tries with these vain thoughts to make his sad days more sweet: else he shall have nowhere to turn his face; for he has been prohibited from showing with other ventures other virtue, as not being worthy of his labors.

The reward hoped for is that everyone stand aside and smirk, speaking ill of what he sees and hears. This is the reason why, without any doubt, the antique virtue deserts our present century: for nobody, when he sees that everyone does nothing but find fault, is going to groan and heave, making with infinite pains a work that the wind wastes and the mists will hide.

If, however, anyone has in mind to speak ill,

take him by the hair and push him aside. I warn him, I say to such a one that somebody else knows how to speak ill as well as he, that the very first art he learned in fact was this; and that in all the world wherever Italian is spoken, he esteems nobody; though he might pay reverence to the man who can wear a better mantle than he.

But let us leave saying ill to such as like it, and return to our case, and not lose too much time. We must not give too much weight to words, nor esteem that monster who haply knows not whether he may be alive or dead. Callimaco is coming out, and has Siro his servant with him, and will set forth everything in due course. Listen everyone and look for no more argument just now.

ACT ONE

SCENE I

(CALLIMACO *and* SIRO)

CALLIMACO

Siro, don't go away; I want you a little.

SIRO

Here I am.

CALLIMACO

I fancy you wondered at my leaving Paris so suddenly, and now you wonder at my being here a month without doing anything.

SIRO

That's the truth.

CALLIMACO

If I've not told you before now what I'm going to tell you, it hasn't been because I didn't trust you, but because I think that when there's something we don't want known, it's better not to tell it, unless

we're obliged to. But now I think I need your help and so I want to tell you everything.

SIRO

I'm your servant; servants ought never to ask their masters questions or pry into any of their actions; but when of themselves the masters tell something, then the servants should serve them faithfully; so I have done and I will do.

CALLIMACO

I know that. I fancy you've heard me say a thousand times (but it's nothing to me that you've heard it a thousand times) how when I was ten years old, my father and mother being dead, I was sent by my guardians to Paris, where I have been for twenty years. And because at the end of ten years, there began through the death of King Charles the wars in Italy, which ruined this province, I decided to live in Paris and not come back to my own country, thinking I could live safer in that place than here.

SIRO

That's right.

CALLIMACO

I ordered all my goods here to be sold, except the house, and arranged to live there, and there

have been another ten years with the greatest happiness.

SIRO

So I know.

CALLIMACO

I divided my time partly in studies, partly in pleasure and partly in affairs; and managed so that one never got in the way of another. And thus, as you know, I lived very quietly, pleasing everyone and contriving to offend none, so that I seemed to be liked by townsmen, by gentlemen, by the working people, by the rich and by the poor.

SIRO

That's true.

CALLIMACO

But since it seemed to fortune that I was having much too fair sailing in this world, she caused me to meet in Paris a certain Camillo Calfucci.

SIRO

I begin to guess your trouble.

CALLIMACO

He, like other Florentines, was often invited to my house; and in talking together one day it hap-

pened that we fell into a dispute as to where the more beautiful women were to be found, in Italy or in France; and since I couldn't talk on the subject of the Italians, because I had left there when I was so small, another Florentine who was present took the French side and Camillo the Italian; and after many arguments right and left, Camillo, in something of a temper, said that if all the women in Italy should prove to be monsters, this one kinswoman of his could redeem the honor of them all.

SIRO

Now I know what you're coming to.

CALLIMACO

He named Donna Lucrezia, wife of Messer Nicia Calfucci, of whom he sang so many praises for both her beauty and her habits that he left us all gaping, and he gave me such a wish to see her that I dropped every other consideration; I thought of neither war nor peace in Italy, but got ready to come here. And when I arrived I found the fame of Donna Lucrezia a long way under the truth—something that happens all too rarely—and now I'm so bitten with desire for her that I can get no peace.

SIRO

If you'd told me of this in Paris, I'd have known how to advise you; but now I don't know what to say.

CALLIMACO

I haven't told you this to get your advice. It's partly to let off steam myself, and partly because I want you to be ready to help me when I need you.

SIRO

I'm the readiest man in the world. But what hope have you?

CALLIMACO

Alas, none or very little; and I tell you this: first of all her very nature is against me; for 'tis most honest and every way strange to these love matters; she has a very rich husband, who lets himself be governed by her in everything; and if he's not young neither is he so very old as he seems; she has no kin or neighbors with whom she goes to parties and festivals and other pleasures that young women delight in; no workmen or mechanics are about her house, and she hasn't a servant or a

maid who is not in awe of her; so that there is no opening anywhere for bribes or corruption.

SIRO

Well, then, what do you think you're going to do?

CALLIMACO

There's nothing so desperate, and never was, that you couldn't find some way of hope, however weak and vain, and your great wish and great desire keep it from seeming so.

SIRO

Just the same, what makes you hope?

CALLIMACO

Two things: one the simplicity of Messer Nicia, for though he's a doctor, he's the greatest simpleton and fool in Florence. The other is the wish both he and she have for children, for she's been married six years and has not had a child, and with all that wealth they are dying for one.

SIRO

Have you tried anything yet?

CALLIMACO

Yes, I have, but it's only a little thing.

SIRO

What?

CALLIMACO

You know Ligurio, how he comes constantly to dine with me. He was a marriage agent once; and so is given to begging suppers and dinners. Ligurio is a likable man, Messer Nicia is very friendly with him, and Ligurio gets round him most seasonably; and though Messer Nicia won't ask him to a meal, he lends him money. I have made me a friend of Ligurio and have told him about my love; he has promised heart and soul to help me.

SIRO

Look out that he don't cheat you, you can't trust these gluttons.

CALLIMACO

That's right. Nevertheless when you confide in a man you've got to believe that he'll serve you in good faith. I've promised him, if it succeeds, that he'll get a good fat purse of money; if it doesn't

succeed, he'll sponge a sup or a dinner, which I shouldn't eat alone anyhow.

SIRO

What has he promised to do so far?

CALLIMACO

He has promised to persuade Messer Nicia to take his lady to the baths this May.

SIRO

And what's that to you?

CALLIMACO

What is it? Perhaps in such a place I can make her change her state of mind. In these places you do nothing if not make a holiday; and I'll go there and I'll lead them into every pleasure I can think of, I'll spare no magnificence, believe me. And something may come of it, time will tell.

SIRO

That suits me.

CALLIMACO

This morning when Ligurio left me he promised to see Messer Nicia about this and let me know.

SIRO

Here they are together.

CALLIMACO

I'll draw aside and wait for Ligurio when the doctor leaves him. You go on in the house about your business, and if I want anything I'll say so.

SIRO

I'm off.

SCENE II

(NICIA *and* LIGURIO)

NICIA

I think your advice is good, and I spoke yesterday evening with the lady. She said she'd give me an answer to-day, but to tell you the truth I'm not going on very happy legs just now.

LIGURIO

Because?

NICIA

Because I don't go about willingly picking up bombs. And I don't like having to hoodwink my

wife, my servants and the whole house. Besides I spoke last night to several doctors; one said I should go to San Filipo, the other to Poretta, the other to the Villa; and they all seemed to me a lot of old crows; to tell you the truth these doctors of medicine don't know what they are about.

LIGURIO

What troubles you is what you said first, you're not used to letting the cupola out of your sight, you won't leave Florence.

NICIA

You are wrong there. When I was younger I traveled a lot; there was never a festival at Prato that I was not on hand; and not a castle anywhere around where I had not been; and what's more I've been to Pisa and Leghorn. Come off!

LIGURIO

At Leghorn you saw the sea?

NICIA

You know well enough I saw it.

LIGURIO

How much bigger is it than the Arno?

NICIA

Than the Arno? It's four times as big, six, seven times, I'd say; you see nothing but water, water, water.

LIGURIO

I'm surprised, then, when you've seen so much of the world, you'd make such a fuss about going to the baths.

NICIA

Ah, your mouth's full of mother's milk: it seems to you nothing at all, does it, to turn a house upside down? But, alas, I've such a wish to have children that I'll do anything. You talk about it a little with your master; see where he advises me to go; and I'll go speak with the lady and be with you anon.

LIGURIO

That's good.

SCENE III

(LIGURIO *and* CALLIMACO)

LIGURIO

I don't believe there was ever such a stupid man in the world as that one; and look how fortune has favored him! He's rich, he has a beautiful wife, wise, well-behaved and fit to govern a kingdom. It seems to me you don't often see the proverb about marriage come true that says: God made human beings, and they couple themselves. For often you see a most worthy man married to a beast, and on the contrary a sensible woman married to a madman. But there's one good thing about this particular madness: Callimaco can hope to get something out of it. Yonder he comes. What are you waiting for, Callimaco?

CALLIMACO

I saw you with the doctor and was waiting till you left him to hear what you did.

LIGURIO

What quality of man he is you know: of little prudence and less wits, he leaves Florence most un-

willingly. But I've got him heated up; and he's agreed at last to do anything. We'll pull our plot through, I think, but that's not saying whether or not we'll get what we want out of it.

CALLIMACO

Why?

LIGURIO

How do I know! You know how every kind of people go to these baths; what if a man turned up who pleased Donna Lucrezia more than you do, who was richer in gold than you are and more rich in grace; so that perchance our labor is all vain; what if the crowd of rivals made her still more difficult; what if when you were fast friends at last she turned then to another, not to you?

CALLIMACO

I know that's true. But what must I do? What line can I take? Where can I turn? I must do something, be it great or be it small, be it curst or infamous; better die than live thus. If I could sleep at night, if I could eat, if I could talk, if I could take pleasure in anything, I'd be more patient biding my time. But there's no remedy here; and if I cannot live in hope some way or other, I'll die

anyhow; and seeing I have to die, I'm not for fearing anything but for clinching some scheme, bestial, raw or wicked.

LIGURIO

Don't talk like that; curb this rash soul.

CALLIMACO

You see well how by curbing it I only feed myself on kindred thoughts; and so perforce must we go on with our sending those people to the baths, or launch some other plot, so that I can feed on a hope, if not true at least false, that will soften my pangs a little.

LIGURIO

You are right, and I'm for doing it.

CALLIMACO

I believe it, for you and the likes of you live by cozening people. But I don't think I'll be one of such; for if you played me a trick and I found it out, I'd turn it to my own uses, be sure; and you'd lose the use of my house and the hope of ever having what I have promised you for the future.

LIGURIO

Never doubt my faith; even if it were not so profitable as I wish and hope, your blood is mixed with mine, and I want you to have your desire almost as much as you do. But enough of this. The doctor has commissioned me to find a physician and learn what baths would be good to go to. I would have you do my way, and this is it: say that you have studied medicine and have had some experience in Paris. He'll swallow it easily, because he's stupid and because you have a polished wit and could say something in the learned style.

CALLIMACO

And how shall this serve us?

LIGURIO

Serve to send him to those baths we want, and to clinch as well another plan I've thought of, which will be shorter, more certain and more successful than the baths.

CALLIMACO

What are you saying?

LIGURIO

I'm saying that if you pluck up your spirits and trust in me I'll have this thing done before this time to-morrow. Even if he were the man, which he is not, to investigate whether you are a doctor or not, the short time, the very thing itself, will keep him from speaking of it, and our plot from being spoiled even if he does speak of it.

CALLIMACO

You save my life; this promise is too great and feeds me with too great a hope! What shall I do?

LIGURIO

You'll know when the time comes: for the present it's enough that I tell you; for we've time only to do, not to talk. Go into the house and wait for me there; and I'll go find the doctor; and if I bring him to you, you go on minding what I say, and suit yourself to that.

CALLIMACO

I'll do it, though you are filling me with a hope that I fear me will go up in smoke.

SONG

He who both never felt thy power, O Love,
Hopes all in vain, in vain, to rise
On that true faith that is heaven's highest prize;
Nor knows not what it may be
To live and die together,
To follow loss, to flee prosperity;
Nor how the soul may love its own self less
Than the beloved's soul, nor that distress
When fear and hope steal our heart's fire and pith,
Nor knows how men and gods alike
Do fear the arms that thou are armored with.

ACT TWO

SCENE I

(LIGURIO, NICIA *and* SIRO, *who answers from the house*)

LIGURIO

As I've told you I think God has sent that man to us so that your desire may be fulfilled. In Paris he has had the greatest experience; and you needn't wonder why he has never practiced his art in Florence, why should he? First because he's rich, and second, because he's on the point any minute of going back to Paris.

NICIA

Very well. I shouldn't want to be led into a tangle and left high and dry.

LIGURIO

Don't doubt him; all you have to fear is that he won't take the case, but if he does take it, he won't leave you till he sees it through to the end.

NICIA

For that I trust you; but as for his science, I tell you straight, as I'll tell him indeed, though he be such a man of learning, that he won't sell me any bladder-rattles, I'm not so easy.

LIGURIO

I'll take you to him so that you can talk with him yourself; and if when you've talked with him he does not seem to you for presence, learning and address a man to take off your hat to, say that I'm not I.

NICIA

So be it then, by all the holy angels; let's go. But where is he?

LIGURIO

He lives in this square; that's his door you see opposite you.

NICIA

Right off, be quick.

LIGURIO

Done.

SIRO

What is it?

LIGURIO

Is Callimaco here?

SIRO

Yes, he is.

NICIA

Why don't you say Master Callimaco?

LIGURIO

He cares nothing for such twaddle.

NICIA

That's not the way to talk; do your duty, and if he takes it ill, pay no attention.

SCENE II

(CALLIMACO, NICIA *and* LIGURIO)

CALLIMACO

Who is it wants me?

NICIA

Bona dies, domine magister.

CALLIMACO

Et vobis, domine doctor.

LIGURIO

How does it strike you?

NICIA

Good, by the apostles!

LIGURIO

If you want me to stay by you, speak as I tell you, otherwise we are minding two fires.

CALLIMACO

What's your good business?

NICIA

How do I know? I'm looking for two things that another man, perchance, would flee; to make trouble for myself and for others. I have no children and I want some, and to possess that trouble I come to bother you.

CALLIMACO

May it never displease me to give pleasure to you and to all men so virtuous and good as you are;

I have not labored so many years in Paris to learn my arts if not to serve such men as you.

NICIA

Gran mercé; and when you have need of my arts I will serve you freely. But let us go back to our matter. Have you thought what baths would be good to bring my wife with child? I know that Ligurio here has told you what he has to tell you.

CALLIMACO

That is true; but if I am to comply with your wishes, I must first know the cause of your wife's sterility; for it may proceed from many causes. Nam causae sterilitatis sunt, aut in semine, aut in matrice, aut in instrumentis seminariis, aut in virga, aut in causa extrinseca.

NICIA

This is the most learned man to be found anywhere.

CALLIMACO

This sterility might otherwise be caused by an impotence in you, and if this should be the case, there would not be any remedy.

NICIA

I impotent? Oh, you make me laugh! I don't believe there's a lustier and redder-blooded man in Florence than I am.

CALLIMACO

If that be true, be of good cheer, we'll find you some remedy.

NICIA

Would there be any other remedy beside the baths? For I've no mind for a bother like this myself and the lady would go most unwillingly from Florence.

LIGURIO

Yes, there is, I'm going to answer you. Callimaco is so very considerate that he's too much so. Have you not told me you could prescribe a certain potion that without fail could make her conceive?

CALLIMACO

I have; but I am reserved with men that I know but little; I would not have them think me a charlatan.

NICIA

Don't doubt me; for you've already filled me with such admiration that there is nothing I would not believe or do at your hands.

LIGURIO

I think you should see a specimen of her. . . .

CALLIMACO

Undoubtedly; one may not do less.

LIGURIO

Call Siro and let him go home with the doctor for it, and come back here; we'll wait for you in the house.

CALLIMACO

Siro, go with him; and if it pleases you, Messer Nicia, come back at once, and we'll think of something fitting.

NICIA

How, if it pleases me! I'll be here again in an instant; for I have more faith in you than a Hun has in a sword.

SCENE III

(NICIA *and* SIRO)

NICIA

This master of yours is a very worthy man.

SIRO

More than you can say.

NICIA

The king of France sets great store by him?

SIRO

Enough.

NICIA

And for that reason he ought gladly to be in France.

SIRO

So he thinks.

NICIA

He does quite right. In this country there is nothing but scum; nobody prizes any virtue. If he were here there wouldn't be a man who would

look him in the face. I don't know what to think of it, for I've burst a gut to learn the little I know, and if I had to live by it, I'd grow fat, I can tell you.

SIRO

Don't you make a hundred ducats a year?

NICIA

Go on, not a hundred lire, not a hundred groats! It's this way: anybody in this country who hasn't got the estate of the likes of us, finds not a dog that would bark at him; and we are good for nothing but to go to burials, or to wedding parties or to stay all day on the bench of the Proconsolo and loll. But I don't care, you know where you can stick the whole business. I don't need anybody. If there's anybody worse off than I am let him be worse off. But still I wouldn't want what I say to be heard, or I'd be getting a dig behind that would make me sweat.

SIRO

No doubt.

NICIA

We are at the house; wait for me here; I'll be back at once.

SCENE IV

(SIRO *alone*)

If all the doctors were like this one we should work wonders. This wretched Ligurio and this madman my master are up to something, they're getting him where they can put some shame or other on him! And truly I'd like it too, if I could believe it wouldn't get out, for if it were heard of, I'd be in danger of my life, and my master of both his life and his property. He has already become a physician; I don't know what his game is or what the trick means. But here's the doctor with a vessel in his hand. Who wouldn't laugh at the old bird?

SCENE V

(NICIA *and* SIRO)

NICIA

I've done everything your way, in this I want you to do mine. If I had thought I wouldn't have children, I'd sooner have taken a peasant to wife, for——Are you there, Siro? Then follow me.

What a bother I've undergone to make this woman of mine give me this specimen! And it's not because she's not crazy to have children, it's on her mind more than it is on mine; but if I ask her to do the least little thing, oh, that's another story!

SIRO

Have patience; women must be brought with soft words where you want them.

NICIA

Soft words, after she's rasped me so. Hurry, tell your master and Ligurio that I'm here.

SIRO

Here they are coming out.

SCENE VI

(LIGURIO, CALLIMACO *and* NICIA)

LIGURIO

The doctor will be easy to persuade, the trouble will be the lady, and for that we'll find ways.

CALLIMACO

Have you the specimen?

NICIA

Siro has it under——

CALLIMACO

Give it here. Oh, this specimen shows a weakness of the kidneys.

NICIA

And seems to me muddy, and yet it's quite fresh.

CALLIMACO

Don't be surprised. Nam mulieris urinae sunt semper majoris glossitici, et albedinis, et minoris pulchritudinis, quam virorum. Hujus autem, inter caetera, causa est amplitudo canalium, mixtio eorum ex matrice quae exeunt cum urina.

NICIA

Oh, belly of St. Puccio, how I dote upon this man! Look how bravely he carries off these things!

CALLIMACO

I'm afraid she's poorly covered at night; and for that reason it is raw.

NICIA

She's got a good quilt for her back but she stays four hours on her knees stringing pater nosters before she'll come to bed, and she's a regular beast for standing the cold.

CALLIMACO

In sum, doctor, either you have faith in me or you have not; I on my part will give you the remedy, you, if you have faith in me, will take it; and if this day a year from now your lady has not her little son in her arms, I'll give you two thousand ducats.

NICIA

Only say the word, for I honor you above all men and believe you more than I do my confessor.

CALLIMACO

You must hear that there's nothing more certain to bring on conception than a potion made of mandragola. It's a thing I've experimented with twice a couple of times and always found it true; if it were not so the queen of France would be sterile and countless other princesses of that realm.

NICIA

Is it possible?

CALLIMACO

It's just as I tell you; and fortune has wished you so well that I happened to have brought here with me all those things that are put into that potion, and you can have it at your will.

NICIA

When might I take it?

CALLIMACO

This evening after dinner; because the moon is propitious, and the time could never be more fit.

NICIA

Don't bother about that. You prescribe it by all means, I'll make her take it.

CALLIMACO

Now you must think of this point; the man that first lies with her after she has taken this potion, dies in eight days; nothing in the world could save him.

NICIA

O pox, I don't want such a torment as that on my hands: you won't stick that on me! You've given me loads enough to carry.

CALLIMACO

Be easy, there's a remedy.

NICIA

What?

CALLIMACO

Make another sleep with her right off, so that he will draw to himself by passing the night with her all the infection of the mandragola; after that you can lie with her without danger.

NICIA

I don't want to do this.

CALLIMACO

Why?

NICIA

Because I don't want to make my wife a whore and me a cuckold.

CALLIMACO

What are you saying, doctor? You are not the wise man I took you for; do you hesitate to do what the king of France has done and so many noble gentlemen of his?

NICIA

Do you want me to do such a crazy thing? If I tell her about it she won't want to do it; if I don't tell her I'll be betraying her. It's a case for the magistrate; I don't want to put my head in that noose.

CALLIMACO

If that's all that worries you leave the affair to me.

NICIA

What will you do?

CALLIMACO

I'll tell you. I'll give you the potion this evening after dinner; you give it to her to drink, and put her at once to bed. Later we'll disguise ourselves, Ligurio, Siro and I, and go hunting in the New Market and the Old Market and the first

fine lad we find idle, we'll kidnap him, and with a few cracks on the head will take him into the house, and into your room in the dark; there we'll put him in bed, telling him what he has to do: there won't be any trouble about that. Then in the morning you send him off before daybreak; make your wife go bathe; lie with her at your pleasure and with naught of danger.

NICIA

I'm agreed, since you say that the king and the leading nobles have tried this way; but for the love of God keep it secret.

CALLIMACO

Who would ever tell it?

NICIA

One trouble remains and a grave one.

CALLIMACO

What?

NICIA

To make my wife agree to it; for I don't think she'll ever come around to such a thing.

CALLIMACO

True, but I shouldn't want a wife that I couldn't persuade to do my way.

LIGURIO

I've thought of a remedy for that.

NICIA

What?

LIGURIO

Work through the confessor.

CALLIMACO

Who would persuade the confessor?

LIGURIO

You, I, money, our wickedness, yours.

NICIA

I wager, if for no other reason than just because I say so, she will not want to go to the confessor.

LIGURIO

And there's a remedy for that too.

CALLIMACO

Tell me?

LIGURIO

Take her to her mother.

NICIA

She has faith in her.

LIGURIO

And I know that her mother is of our opinion. Let's get on, for it will soon be evening. You go, Callimaco, and we will join you at home two hours from now, see that you have the potion ready. We'll go to the mother's house, the doctor and I, and explain to her; then we will go to the friar, and tell him all of what we have done.

CALLIMACO

Hey, don't leave me alone!

LIGURIO

You seem to me all ready and set.

CALLIMACO

Where do you want me to go now?

LIGURIO

Here, there, this way, that way, Florence is a big place.

CALLIMACO

I'm dead.

SONG

How happy is that's born a fool
And swallows all that he doth hear,
Ambition doth not rule,
His days, he feels not fear,
Which are the seeds of woe;
This doctor of ours so
Bursting is he for sons,
He would believe an ass could fly;
And all else is oblivion's,
And for this he would live or die.

ACT THREE

SCENE I

(SOSTRATA, NICIA *and* LIGURIO)

SOSTRATA

I've always heard it said that the part of a wise man is to make the best of his ills. If you have no other remedy to bring you children and you want to take this one, it need not weigh on your conscience.

NICIA

So be it.

LIGURIO

You go find your daughter, and Messer Nicia and I will find Brother Timoteo her confessor, and tell him our case, so that you'll not have to tell him. You'll see what he will say to you.

SOSTRATA

So be it. Your way is there, I'm going to find Lucrezia, and take her at all costs to speak with the friar.

SCENE II

(NICIA *and* LIGURIO)

NICIA

Perhaps you are surprised, Ligurio, that you have to spin so many lies to persuade my wife, but if you knew all you wouldn't be surprised at it.

LIGURIO

I fancy it may be because all women are suspicious.

NICIA

It's not that. She used to be the sweetest person in the world and the easiest to get on with; but hearing a neighbor of hers say that if she vowed to hear forty mornings the first mass of the Servi, she would find herself with child, she made the vow and went perhaps twenty mornings. Then one of those beastly friars began to hang around her and she ended by not going back again. It's a bad thing when those who ought to set a good example act like that. How say you?

LIGURIO

It's the devil to pay if that be true.

NICIA

Since then she has her ears up like a rabbit, and anything you tell her to do, she puts a thousand difficulties in the way.

LIGURIO

I'm not surprised. But that vow, how is it to be fulfilled?

NICIA

It's dispensed with.

LIGURIO

Good. But give me, if you have it, twenty-five ducats; for we must spend something in these matters and make a friend of the friar right off and give him hopes of more.

NICIA

Take it, that doesn't trouble me; I'll make provision elsewhere.

LIGURIO

These friars are a shrewd lot; and no wonder, since they know our sins and their own too. Anyone who didn't know his way about with them might find himself outwitted. However I would not

have you spoil everything by talking, because the likes of you, who are buried all day in their studies and learn all they know from books, don't understand worldly things. (This one is so dull I fear he'll spoil everything.)

NICIA

Tell me what you want me to do.

LIGURIO

You leave the talking to me, and don't say a word unless I give you the sign.

NICIA

I'm agreed. What sign will you make?

LIGURIO

I'll shut an eye, will bite my lip. Let's do nothing else. How long is it since you talked to the friar?

NICIA

More than ten years.

LIGURIO

That's all right. I'll tell him that you are deaf; don't you answer, and never say anything unless we speak very loud.

NICIA

Very good, agreed.

LIGURIO

Don't be bothered if I say something that seems to cut across our plans, for all will come out right.

NICIA

In God's good time.

SCENE III

(TIMOTEO *and a* LADY)

TIMOTEO

If you want to confess I will do what you want.

THE LADY

Not to-day: some one is waiting for me and I'm quite out of breath with hurrying so. Have you said those masses of our lady?

TIMOTEO

Yes, Madam.

THE LADY

Take this florin now and say every Monday for two months the mass of the dead for my husband's

soul. Though he was a brute of a man and lived only in the flesh, I cannot resent it when I think of it. But you think he is in purgatory?

TIMOTEO

Undoubtedly.

THE LADY

I'm not so sure of that. If you only knew how he treated me sometimes. Oh, how miserable I was with him! I put him off as much as I could but he was so importunate. Ugh, Good Lord!

TIMOTEO

Have no fear; the clemency of God is great: if a man doesn't lack the will he'll never lack the time to repent.

THE LADY

Do you think the Turk will go through Italy this year?

TIMOTEO

If you don't pray, yes.

THE LADY

Alas! God help us! What with their devilish ways I'm so afraid of that impaling of theirs. But I see here in the church a lady who has a scarf of

mine, I must go have it of her. I bid you good day.

TIMOTEO

Keep well.

SCENE IV

(TIMOTEO, LIGURIO *and* NICIA)

TIMOTEO

The most charitable people are the women and the most boring. Whoever repels them escapes both the boring and the useful: whoever takes them to his bosom has the useful and the boring together. It's true, there's never an apple without the flies. What are you doing, good men, do I not recognize Messer Nicia?

LIGURIO

Speak loud, for he's pretty deaf, he doesn't hear much any more.

TIMOTEO

You are welcome.

LIGURIO

Louder.

TIMOTEO

Welcome.

NICIA

Glad to see you, father.

TIMOTEO

What have you on hand?

NICIA

Something good.

LIGURIO

Address yourself to me, father, for if you made him hear you'd have to rouse the whole square.

TIMOTEO

What can I do for you?

LIGURIO

Messer Nicia here and another worthy man whom you will meet later, want to distribute two thousand ducats in charitable works.

NICIA

A pox on it!

LIGURIO

(Be quiet, curse you, it won't be that much.) Don't be surprised, father, at what he says; for he doesn't hear and sometimes he thinks he does hear and answers off the point.

TIMOTEO

Just go right ahead, and let him say what he pleases.

LIGURIO

Of such a sum I have a part with me, and have planned that you be the one to distribute it.

TIMOTEO

Willingly.

LIGURIO

But before this charity is given you must help us with a strange case that has come up for Messer Nicia; and only you can help us in this matter; the honor of his house is concerned.

TIMOTEO

What is it?

LIGURIO

I don't know if you are acquainted with Camillo Calfucci, the nephew of Messer Nicia here.

TIMOTEO

Yes, I know him.

LIGURIO

That gentleman went on some business or other to France a year ago; and not having a wife, for

she was dead, left his marriagable daughter in the protection of a convent, whose name we need not mention just yet.

TIMOTEO

And then?

LIGURIO

And then either because the sisters were negligent or the girl was scatter-brained, she found herself four months gone with child: so that if this mishap is not taken care of properly, the doctor, the sisters, the girl, Camillo, the house of Calfucci are put to shame: and the doctor is so much concerned about this shame that he has vowed, if the tale does not get about, to give three hundred ducats for the love of God.

NICIA

What the devil!

LIGURIO

Be quiet. And he will give this into your hands, for only you and the abbess can help us.

TIMOTEO

How?

LIGURIO

Persuade the abbess to give a potion to the girl that will make her miscarry.

TIMOTEO

That's something to think twice about.

LIGURIO

Consider if you do it how many good things will be the result. You preserve the honor of the convent, of the girl, of the family; you restore a daughter to her father; you satisfy Messer Nicia here and all those kin of his; you do the vast amount of charity that these three hundred ducats will make possible; and on the other hand you harm nothing but a piece of flesh unborn, without senses, which in a thousand ways might miscarry anyhow. And I think that that is best that does most good and makes the most people a little happy.

TIMOTEO

So be it in God's name, I'll do what you ask; for God and for charity all shall be done. Tell me the convent, give me the potion, and, if it's agreeable to you, give me money, so that I can begin to do good.

LIGURIO

Now you seem the holy man I thought you were. Take this part of the money. The convent is——

But wait: there's a lady there in the church beckoning to me: I'll be straight back. Don't go, Messer Nicia, I'd like two words with you.

SCENE V

(TIMOTEO *and* NICIA)

TIMOTEO

This girl, how old is she?

NICIA

I'm amazed.

TIMOTEO

I say how old is this girl?

NICIA

May God curse her!

TIMOTEO

Why?

NICIA

So she will be cursed.

TIMOTEO

I'm in a hole, trying to work with a fool, and a deaf man. One runs away, the other can't hear.

But if these pieces are not merely brass checks, I'll get on better with them. Here's Ligurio coming back.

SCENE VI

(LIGURIO, TIMOTEO *and* NICIA)

LIGURIO

Be quiet, Messer Nicia; I have great news, father.

TIMOTEO

What?

LIGURIO

The woman I've just spoken to tells me that the girl has miscarried of herself.

TIMOTEO

Good! This charity will go into the public moneys.

LIGURIO

What are you talking about?

TIMOTEO

I say that all the more now you ought to make this charity.

LIGURIO

The charity will be made when you wish; but you must do something else for the doctor's benefit.

TIMOTEO

What is it?

LIGURIO

Something that's less trouble, less scandal, more acceptable to us, more useful to you.

TIMOTEO

What is it? I'm on such friendly terms and seem to be so arm in arm with you that there's nothing I wouldn't do.

LIGURIO

I'd rather tell you in church, just between ourselves. The doctor won't mind waiting here. We'll be here anon.

NICIA

As the toad said to the harrow.

TIMOTEO

Come.

SCENE VII

(NICIA *alone*)

NICIA

Is this day or night? Am I myself or do I dream? Am I drunk, when I have not taken a drink to-day, to go on with this tomfoolery? We are here to say one thing to the friar and he says another; then he orders me to be deaf. I ought to have stopped my ears with pitch so as not to have heard the crazy things he said; and God knows to what end. I find myself twenty-five ducats short, and nothing yet done about my business, and now I'm stuck here like a simpleton. But here they are coming back; damn them if they haven't settled my business!

SCENE VIII

(TIMOTEO, LIGURIO *and* NICIA)

TIMOTEO

Let the ladies come. I know what I have to do; and if my authority is worth anything we shall settle this parentage business this very evening.

LIGURIO

Messer Nicia, Brother Timoteo is going to settle everything. See to it that the ladies come.

NICIA

How you relieve me! Shall it be a boy?

LIGURIO

A boy.

NICIA

I weep with tenderness.

TIMOTEO

You two go into the church, I'll await the ladies here. Keep to the side where they won't see you; and when they are gone I'll tell you what they said.

SCENE IX

(TIMOTEO *alone*)

I don't know which of us has cheated the other. This miserable Ligurio comes to me with that first news just to try me out; if I had not agreed to that he would not have mentioned this last, so as not to have it exposed for nothing; about the first,

since it was false anyway, they cared nothing. It's true that I've been deceived, but the deceit can serve my ends very well. Messer Nicia and Callimaco are both rich and each for diverse reasons can be well plucked. The thing must be kept dark, that's as important to them as it is to me. Be it as they wish, I'll not repent me of it. Forsooth I doubt not we shall find it hard, for Donna Lucrezia is sensible and good. But I'll work on her kindness, all women have little brains, and if one of them knows enough to say two words, there must be a sermon about it: for in the realm of the blind the one-eyed is king. And here she is with her mother, who is a very beast and will be of great use in bringing her around to my wishes.

SCENE X

(SOSTRATA *and* LUCREZIA)

SOSTRATA

I'm sure you believe, daughter, that I set as much store by your honor as anybody in the world, and that I should never advise you to do anything that was not good. I have told you and I tell you again

that if Brother Timoteo says that there's nothing in it to trouble your conscience, you may do it without another thought.

LUCREZIA

I have never had a doubt that the longing Messer Nicia has for children would sooner or later make us do something foolish; and just on this account, whenever he has come to me with some notion, have I been jealous and suspicious of it. But of all the things that we have tried, this last seems to me the strangest; to have to submit my body to this outrage, and to cause a man to die for outraging me; I'd never have believed, no not if I were the last woman left in the world and the human race had to start all over again from me, that such a thing could have fallen to my lot.

SOSTRATA

I can't explain such matters, daughter; you'll talk to the friar and you'll see what he tells you, and then do as you are advised by him, by us and by those who wish you well.

LUCREZIA

I'm sweating with rage.

SCENE XI

(TIMOTEO, LUCREZIA *and* SOSTRATA)

TIMOTEO

You are welcome both. I know what you wish to know from me, Messer Nicia has told me. Truly I have been in my books more than two hours studying this case; and after much question, I find many things both in general and in particular that are in our favor.

LUCREZIA

Are you serious or jesting?

TIMOTEO

Ah! Donna Lucrezia, are these matters for jesting? Is that what you think of me?

LUCREZIA

Father, no; but this seems to me the strangest business I ever heard of.

TIMOTEO

Madam, I believe you: but I would not have you say any more in this vein. There are many things which seen at a distance appear terrible, unbear-

able, strange; but when you come nearer to them they prove to be human, bearable, familiar; wherefore is it said that the fear is worse than the evil. And this is one of them.

LUCREZIA

It's the will of God.

TIMOTEO

I'll go back to what I was saying at first. For the sake of your conscience you must go on this general principle: where there is a certain good and an uncertain evil, we must not forsake that good for fear of that evil. Here is a certain good, you will be with child. You will donate a soul to the Lord God. The uncertain evil is that he who lies with you after you've taken the potion, dies: but he will also find himself among those who will never die. But since the thing is dubious, it's right that Messer Nicia should run no risk. And if the act is sinful, it's only in a manner of speaking so after all, for the will is what sins, not the body: it's a sin on the grounds that it displeases your husband, and you please him: it's a sin on the grounds of taking pleasure in it, and you take no pleasure in it. Moreover the end is what you must consider in every case. Your end is to fill a seat

in Paradise, to make your husband happy. The Bible says that the daughters of Lot, believing that they alone were left in the world, consorted with their father; and since their intention was good they did not sin.

LUCREZIA

What would you persuade me to?

SOSTRATA

Let yourself be persuaded, daughter. Don't you see that a woman who has no children has no home? When her husband is dead she remains, like a beast, deserted by everyone.

TIMOTEO

I swear to you, Madam, by the holy sacrament, that your duty in this case is to obey your husband, though it were to eat meat on Wednesdays; which is a sin that no holy water can wash away.

LUCREZIA

Where are you pushing me, father?

TIMOTEO

I'm urging you to things that you'll ask God to bless me for, and that next year you'll value more than now.

SOSTRATA

She'll do what you wish. I'll put her to bed myself to-night. What are you afraid of, idiot? There are fifty women in this land who would lift their hands to heaven for this that you'll be getting.

LUCREZIA

I consent; but I don't expect to be alive to-morrow morning.

TIMOTEO

Have no fear, my daughter: I will pray God for you; I will say a prayer to the angel Rafael to be at your side. Go quickly and prepare for this mystery that the night will bring.

SOSTRATA

Rest in peace, father.

LUCREZIA

God and Our Lady keep me from harm.

SCENE XII

(TIMOTEO, LIGURIO *and* NICIA)

TIMOTEO

O Ligurio, come here.

LIGURIO

How goes it?

TIMOTEO

Well. They have gone home disposed to do everything, and not to make us any trouble; the mother is going with her and will put her to bed.

NICIA

Are you telling the truth?

TIMOTEO

Heigho, you are healed of your deafness!

LIGURIO

San Chimenti, to whom the sterile ladies pray, has shown him grace.

TIMOTEO

If you wish to offer an image in order to make a place to do a little business——So that I shall have profit with you.

NICIA

We've got to chattering. Will the lady make any trouble about doing what I want?

TIMOTEO

No, I tell you.

NICIA

I'm the happiest man in the world.

TIMOTEO

I believe it. You'll soon be pecking at a baby boy: let him that has not go without.

LIGURIO

Go, brother, to your prayers; and if there's more need we'll come find you. You, Messer Nicia, go to her and keep her fast in this opinion; and I'll go find Master Callimaco, to send you the potion; let me see you in an hour and arrange what we are to do when the time comes.

NICIA

Excellent; good-bye.

TIMOTEO

Keep well.

SONG

So sweet is deceit
Toward some desired, dear end,
That everything is stripped of pain,
And every bitter taste is made sweet.

O remedy high and rare,
Thou showest the narrow path to erring souls:
Thou, too, with thy great power to make
Men happy, makest Love rich and fair;
With holy counsels only thou dost quell
Stone, poison, magic spell.

ACT FOUR

SCENE I

(CALLIMACO *alone*)

I should like excellent well to hear what they have done. What can it be that keeps Ligurio away? It's not only eleven, it's twelve o'clock. In what anguish of soul have I been and am! It's true indeed that fortune and nature keep the account even: you won't find a good that some evil will not arise to match it. The more my hope increases, the more my fear increases. Poor me! How shall I ever live in the midst of so many ills and wracked by these hopes and fears? I'm like a ship vexed by two contrary winds, so that the nearer it is to port the more it is afraid. The simplicity of Messer Nicia gives me hope; the prudence and firmness of Donna Lucrezia makes me fear. Alas, I find no peace anywhere! Sometimes I try to control myself. I reprove myself for this frenzy and say to myself: What are you

doing? Have you gone mad? When you possess her, what then? You will know your error and repent the troubles and worries you've had. You know, don't you, how little good there is in things that man desires, compared to what man has dreamed of finding? On the other hand the worst that can happen to you is to die and go to hell. There are so many others dead and so many worthy men in hell, are you ashamed to go there? Look fortune in the face, flee what's ill, and when you cannot flee it, bear it like a man. Don't be prostrated and disheartened like a woman. Thus I keep a good heart, but it doesn't get me very far, for all of me burns with desire to be once with her, I feel excited from the soles of my feet to the top of my head; my legs shake, my bowels rumble, my heart jumps out of my breast, my arms are helpless, my tongue is mute, my eyes dazzle, my brain whirls. If I could only find Ligurio I could let myself off to him. But here he comes hurrying to me: his news will make me either live some little more or die outright.

SCENE II

(LIGURIO *and* CALLIMACO)

LIGURIO

I could never want more than I do now to find Callimaco, and never be sorrier to find him. If I bore sad news I should have met him at once. I have been at his house, in the square, at the market, on the bench of the Spini, at the loggia of the Tornaquinci; and haven't found him. These lovers have quicksilver under their feet, and can't stop.

CALLIMACO

I see Ligurio go looking about over there, could he be seeking me perhaps? What's the matter with me that I don't call him. He looks very happy. O Ligurio, O Ligurio!

LIGURIO

O Callimaco, where have you been?

CALLIMACO

What news?

LIGURIO

Good.

CALLIMACO

Truly good?

LIGURIO

The best.

CALLIMACO

Does Lucrezia agree?

LIGURIO

Yes.

CALLIMACO

The friar does what is needed?

LIGURIO

He does.

CALLIMACO

O blessed friar! I'll always pray God for him.

LIGURIO

O excellent! As if God's grace should reward for evil as well as good. The friar will want something else besides prayers!

CALLIMACO

What will he want?

LIGURIO

Money.

CALLIMACO

Give it to him. How much have you promised him?

LIGURIO

Three hundred ducats.

CALLIMACO

You've done well.

LIGURIO

The doctor has disgorged twenty-five.

CALLIMACO

How?

LIGURIO

It suffices that he has disgorged it.

CALLIMACO

Lucrezia's mother, what has she done?

LIGURIO

Almost everything. When she learned that her daughter was to have this good night without sin, she never left off begging, commanding, encouraging Lucrezia, and so took her to the friar and there managed in such a way that she consented.

CALLIMACO

O God! what have I done to deserve such blessings! I shall die with joy.

LIGURIO

What sort is this! Now he dies for joy, now for grief, this man is bound to die some way or other. Have you the potion ready?

CALLIMACO

I have.

LIGURIO

What will you send her?

CALLIMACO

A glass of ipocras which is good to make the stomach stronger and the brain gay. Alas, alas, alas, I'm ruined!

LIGURIO

What is it? What will it be now?

CALLIMACO

There's no remedy for us.

LIGURIO

What the devil can it be now?

CALLIMACO

And nothing is won; I'm walled up in a furnace.

LIGURIO

Why, tell me why? Take your hand down off your face.

CALLIMACO

Oh, don't you know that I have said to Messer Nicia that you, he, Siro and I will catch some one to put to bed with his wife?

LIGURIO

How does that matter?

CALLIMACO

How does it matter? If I'm with you how can I be the one who is caught? If I'm not with you he will see through the trick.

LIGURIO

You are right; but is there no remedy?

CALLIMACO

I don't believe so.

LIGURIO

Yes, it will prosper yet.

CALLIMACO

How?

LIGURIO

I must think a little.

CALLIMACO

You've shown me the light; if you have to think now I'm lost.

LIGURIO

I've found it.

CALLIMACO

What?

LIGURIO

I'll have the friar help us in this; he'll do the rest.

CALLIMACO

In what way, how?

LIGURIO

We must all disguise ourselves: I'll make the friar disguise himself and disguise his voice, his face, his clothes, and I'll tell the doctor how that one is you; he'll believe it.

CALLIMACO

That suits me. But what shall I do?

LIGURIO

You'll put on a cloak, and with a lute in your hand you'll come along by the corner of his house singing a little song.

CALLIMACO

With the face uncovered?

LIGURIO

Yes, if you wore a mask he'd be suspicious.

CALLIMACO

And would he not know me?

LIGURIO

He won't, for you must distort your face, you must have your mouth open and twisted around, and one eye shut. Try it a little.

CALLIMACO

Do it this way?

LIGURIO

No.

CALLIMACO

This way?

LIGURIO

Not enough.

CALLIMACO

This way then?

LIGURIO

Yes, yes, remember how you do it. I have a nose at home; you must stick it on.

CALLIMACO

Very well, what then?

LIGURIO

When you appear at the corner, we'll be on hand, snatching the lute, seizing you, surrounding you, taking you into the house, putting you to bed; the rest you must do yourself.

CALLIMACO

Well and good.

LIGURIO

That gets you there; when it comes to going back again that will be your affair not ours.

CALLIMACO

How?

LIGURIO

Win her to-night, and before you depart make yourself known to her; discover the trick, show her the love you bear her, tell her how well you wish her; and how without scandal she may be your friend, and with great scandal your enemy. It's not possible she won't agree with you or that she should wish this night to be the only one.

CALLIMACO

You believe that?

LIGURIO

I'm sure of it. But let us not lose more time; it's already two o'clock. Call Siro, send the potion to Master Nicia, and wait for me in the house. I'll go for the friar; make him disguise himself and bring him here; we'll find the doctor and do what remains to do.

CALLIMACO

You are right. Go ahead.

SCENE III

(CALLIMACO *and* SIRO)

CALLIMACO

O, Siro.

SIRO

Master.

CALLIMACO

Come here.

SIRO

Here I am.

CALLIMACO

Take the silver goblet that is in the wardrobe of my room and cover it with a piece of cloth and

bring it here; and see that you don't spill any on the way.

SIRO

It shall be done.

CALLIMACO

That fellow has been ten years with me and always served me faithfully. I believe I can trust him in this affair as well; and though I have not told him of this plot, he guesses it and how bad it is, and is getting used to the idea.

SIRO

Here it is.

CALLIMACO

Good, here, go to Messer Nicia's house and tell him that this is the medicine that the lady has to take right after dinner, and the sooner after dinner the better: and that we'll be there at his corner at the appointed time, and see that you are there. Be off.

SIRO

I'm off.

CALLIMACO

Mind this: if he wants you to wait for him, wait and bring him here with you; if he does not wish it, come back here, after you've given it to him and carried out your mission.

SIRO

Yes, sir

SCENE IV

(CALLIMACO *alone*)

I'm waiting for Ligurio to come back with the friar: and anybody that says waiting is a hard lot tells the truth. I'm losing ten pounds to the minute thinking where I am now and where I might be two hours from now, fearing that something may turn up that will spoil my plot. If it should, this would be the last night of my life, for I would throw myself into the Arno, or hang myself, or throw myself out of that window, or stab myself with this knife on her doorstep: something to end my life. But I see Ligurio. He has some one with him who looks lame, hunchbacked, and must surely be the friar disguised. Oh these friars, you know one and you know all. Who is the other one with them? It looks like Siro, who has finished his mission to the doctor; it is. I will wait here to join them.

SCENE V

(SIRO, LIGURIO, TIMOTEO, *disguised, and* CALLIMACO)

SIRO

Who's with you, Ligurio?

LIGURIO

A worthy man.

SIRO

Is he lame or just pretending?

LIGURIO

Mind your own business.

SIRO

Oh, he's got the face of a great carouser.

LIGURIO

Shut up, you've already tired us out! Where's Callimaco?

CALLIMACO

Here I am. You are happily come.

LIGURIO

O Callimaco, look after this fool Siro, he's already said a thousand crazy things.

CALLIMACO

Siro, look here. This evening you've got to do everything Ligurio tells you; and take account, when I order you, who I am. And what you see, feel, and hear you must keep most secret, as you value property, honor, my life and your own good.

SIRO

So I will.

CALLIMACO

Did you give the goblet to the doctor?

SIRO

Yes, sir.

CALLIMACO

What did he say?

SIRO

That all will be ready.

TIMOTEO

Is this Callimaco?

CALLIMACO

I'm at your service! You may dispose of me and of my goods as if it were yourself.

TIMOTEO

I have heard so and I believe it; and I am moved to do for you what I would do for no other man in the world.

CALLIMACO

You will lose nothing by your pains.

TIMOTEO

Your good will is enough.

LIGURIO

Let's leave off ceremony. We'll go disguise ourselves, Siro and I. Callimaco, you come with us and get yourself ready; the friar will wait here: we'll return at once and go find Master Nicia.

CALLIMACO

Let's go.

TIMOTEO

I'll wait for you.

SCENE VI

(TIMOTEO *alone*)

They are not without good grounds who say that bad company leads men to the gallows; and

many times an evil piece of business may be too easy and too good, just as it may be too wicked. God knows I had no thought of hurting anybody; I was in my cell saying my office, I was making my devotions, and along comes this devil of a Ligurio and makes me stick a finger in a sin, and from that I have put in an arm and then my whole person, and I don't know yet what I'm into. One comfort I have: when anything is important to many people many people look after it. But here are Ligurio and the servant coming back.

SCENE VII

(TIMOTEO, LIGURIO *and* SIRO, *disguised*)

TIMOTEO

You are welcome.

LIGURIO

Are we going well?

TIMOTEO

Very well.

LIGURIO

We need the doctor still: let's go toward his house. It's growing late, come.

SIRO

Who is it opening his door? Is it the servant?

LIGURIO

No, it's he. Ah, ah, ah, ah!

SIRO

You are laughing.

LIGURIO

Who wouldn't laugh? He has a big cloak on him that doesn't cover his behind. What the devil has he on his head? It looks like a monk's hood; and a small sword somewhere. Ah, ah! He's mumbling I don't know what. Let's step aside, and we'll hear some ill fortune of his wife.

SCENE VIII

(NICIA *disguised*)

How many grimaces this crazy piece of mine has made! She has sent the servant to her mother's house and the maid to the farm. I praise her for that, but I don't praise her for making so many difficulties before she would go to bed. I don't want to—how shall I do such—what are you

making me do—oh, alas, oh mamma—If her mother had not scolded her she would not have gone to bed at all. Plague take her! I like to see a woman modest but not so modest as this: what is it that's turned her head, this cat's brain of hers! Well I know what I'm about. I'm in high style. Who'd know me now? I seem bigger, younger, trimmer; and there's not a woman in the world would take any money for going to bed with me. But where shall I find them?

SCENE IX

(LIGURIO, NICIA, TIMOTEO *and* SIRO)

LIGURIO

Good evening, Master Nicia.

NICIA

Oi, oi!

LIGURIO

Have no fear, we are we.

NICIA

Oh, you are all here! If I hadn't known you before I'd have given you a crack with this stick

as hard as I could. You are Ligurio? and you Siro? and the other is the master? Ah!

LIGURIO

Yes, sir.

NICIA

Look how well he's disguised, nobody would ever know him.

LIGURIO

He has put two nuts in his mouth so that his voice won't be recognized.

NICIA

You're a numskull.

LIGURIO

Why?

NICIA

Why didn't you tell me so at first; I could have put in two of them also. You know how much it matters that your speech shouldn't be known.

LIGURIO

Here, put this in your mouth.

NICIA

What is it?

LIGURIO

A ball of wax.

NICIA

Give it here. Ca, pu, ca, co, co, cu, cu, spu! What's this, you fool?

LIGURIO

Oh, pardon me, please do, I've exchanged them without noticing it.

NICIA

Ca, ca, pu, pu. What—what, what, was it?

LIGURIO

Aloes.

NICIA

Curse you! spu, spu! Master, you say nothing.

TIMOTEO

Ligurio has angered me.

NICIA

Oh, how well you disguise your voice!

LIGURIO

Let's not lose more time here. I'll be the captain and give the army orders for the day. At the right corner Callimaco will be stationed; at the left I; between the two corners will be the doctor

here; Siro will be the rear guard, to succor any band that weakens. The password will be San Cucu.

NICIA

Who is San Cucu?

LIGURIO

The most honored saint to be found in France. Come, let's put the ambush at this corner. Listen, I hear a lute.

NICIA

It is one. What are we going to do?

LIGURIO

First send a scout to see who it is; and when he he brings word, act accordingly.

NICIA

Who'll go?

LIGURIO

You go, Siro. You know what you must do, observe, examine, come back quickly, bring news.

SIRO

I'm off.

NICIA

I don't want to catch a crab who might be some old man weak and puny; so that we'd have to play this game all over again tomorrow night.

LIGURIO

Don't worry, Siro has a head on him. Here he is back. What did you find, Siro?

SIRO

It's the finest lad you ever saw. He is not twenty-five, and he comes along alone in a cloak, playing his lute.

NICIA

He's the one surely, if you are telling the truth. But look out that your soup is not thrown in your face.

SIRO

He's just what I told you.

LIGURIO

Let's wait till he has finished his song, and suddenly be on his back.

NICIA

See here, master, you are like a dumb statue. There he is.

CALLIMACO

"May the devil come to bed with you
Since there may not come I."

LIGURIO

Halt! Give over the lute.

CALLIMACO

Alas! What have I done?

NICIA

You'll see. Cover his head, gag him.

LIGURIO

Surround him.

NICIA

Hit him again, hit him again, put him in the house.

TIMOTEO

Master Nicia, I'm going to bed, I've such a headache, that I'm about to die. And if you don't need me I'll not return to-morrow morning.

NICIA

Yes, Master, don't come back; we can manage among ourselves.

SCENE X

(TIMOTEO *alone*)

They are shut up in the house and I'll go to the convent. And you, spectators, don't wait, because

to-night nobody will sleep; so that these deeds be not disturbed. I'll say the office. Ligurio and Siro will sup, for they have not eaten to-day. The doctor will go from room to room to see that all is tidy. Callimaco and Donna Lucreza will not sleep; for I know if I were he and you were she that we should not sleep.

SONG

O sweet night, O blessed and silent hours of night,
Be with desirous lovers;
In you is such delight
You are the source the happy soul discovers;
You give a just reward
To the amorous hosts
For trials long and hard;
You light, O happy hours, and move
In every frozen breast the flame of love.

ACT FIVE

SCENE I

(TIMOTEO *alone*)

All night I couldn't close my eyes, so great was my desire to hear how Callimaco and the rest have come out; I tried to pass the time with other matters. I said matins, read a life of the blessed fathers; went to church and lit a lamp that had gone out; put a veil on a miraculous Madonna. How many times have I said to these friars to keep her clean. It's no wonder there's little devotion. I can remember when she had five hundred images, wax, silver and what not, at her feet and all around, and what have we to-day? about twenty. We are to blame for it for not keeping up her reputation. Every evening after benediction we used to make a procession and every Saturday sing in praise of her. People were always making us offerings here because they saw fresh images; and in confession we prevailed on many men and women to make

offerings. Now there's nothing like that, and is it any wonder that things get cold? Oh, how little sense these friars of mine have! But I hear a hubbub in Master Nicia's house. Faith, there he is, and they are bringing out the prisoner. I'll go join them. They're taking a long time about it and day is breaking. I'd like to hear what they say without their seeing me.

SCENE II

(NICIA, CALLIMACO, LIGURIO *and* SIRO)

NICIA

You hold him there and I'll hold him here, and, Siro, you catch him by the seat behind.

CALLIMACO

Don't hurt me.

LIGURIO

Don't be afraid, run for it.

NICIA

Let's go no farther.

LIGURIO

That's right. Let him go here. Turn him round twice, so that he won't know where he comes from. Turn him, Siro.

SIRO

There.

NICIA

Turn him once again.

SIRO

There.

CALLIMACO

My lute.

LIGURIO

Go, you rake, if I hear you speak I'll cut your throat.

NICIA

He's fled. Let's go take off this stuff, and it would be a good thing too to be abroad early, so that we won't seem to have been up all night.

LIGURIO

That's right.

NICIA

Go, Siro, and find Master Callimaco, and tell him that the plot carried well.

LIGURIO

What can we say to him? We know nothing. You know that once inside the house, we went in the pantry to have a drink. You and the mother-in-law had him on your hands, and we never saw you again until now, when you called us to help you put him out.

NICIA

That's true. Oh! I've fine things to tell you. My wife was in bed in the dark. Sostrata waited for me at the fire. I went on with our fine lad, and so as to leave nothing overlooked, I took him into a pantry that I have in the hall, where there was a dim light, so that he couldn't see my face.

LIGURIO

Quite rightly.

NICIA

I made him strip. He was whining, I snarling at him like a dog. He is ugly in the face. He had a big nose, a twisted mouth; but you never saw such beautiful flesh! White, soft, smooth, and about the rest don't ask me.

LIGURIO

That's not the way to talk, you ought to have seen everything.

NICIA

You're pulling my leg. Since I'd put my hand in the dish I wanted to go to the bottom of it: I wanted to see if he was healthy. If he'd had some disease, where would I have been? What would have happened to me?

LIGURIO

You are right.

NICIA

When I had seen that he was all right, I put him behind me and in the dark I led him into the room. I put him to bed and then left, feeling my way along the wall with my hands, for I'm not used to having lightening bugs for lanterns.

LIGURIO

With what prudence you've managed everything!

NICIA

I groped along and then left the room, shut the door, and went to my mother-in-law, who was in the kitchen; and we have waited all night talking.

LIGURIO

What did you talk about?

NICIA

About the stupidity of Lucrezia and how much better it would have been if without so much winding about she had yielded at first. Then we talked of the baby till I seemed to have the little boy in my arms. As soon as I heard it strike one, and fearing daylight might overtake us, I went into the room. And would you believe it I couldn't make that clown get up.

LIGURIO

I believe it.

NICIA

He liked his medicine. However, he got up; I called you and we brought him out.

LIGURIO

It has all gone well.

NICIA

Should I be sorry do you think?

LIGURIO

Of what?

NICIA

Because that poor young fellow has to die so soon and this night cost him so dear.

LIGURIO

Oh! you needn't trouble your thoughts with that; that's his affair.

NICIA

But I seem to be a thousand years finding Master Callimaco, so as to rejoice with him.

LIGURIO

He'll be abroad in an hour. But the day is beginning to break. We are going to strip these off, what are you going to do?

NICIA

I'm going into the house too and put on my good clothes. I'll make my wife get up and bathe and make her come to church to be shriven. I'd like you and Callimaco to be there so that we can speak to the friar and thank him and reward him for the good turn he's done us.

LIGURIO

Good, it shall be done.

SCENE III

(TIMOTEO *alone*)

I've heard what they said and am pleased, considering what a fool this doctor is. But his last decision most of all has delighted me; they ought to be coming by now; I'd rather not wait any longer here but in the church where my merchandise is of more worth. But who's coming out of that house? It looks to me like Ligurio and with him that must be Callimaco. I don't want them to see me for reasons said. However, if they don't come to find me I'll always be ready to go find them.

SCENE IV

(CALLIMACO *and* LIGURIO)

CALLIMACO

When I made myself known to her and had given her to understand how much I loved her, and how easily through the simplicity of her husband we could live happily and without scandal; promising her that whenever it should please God to remove

him, I would take her for my wife; and she having tasted what a difference there is between my company and that of Master Nicia and between the kisses of a young lover and those of an old husband; she with a sigh said: "Since through your shrewdness and the folly of my husband, the simplicity of my mother and the baseness of my confessor, I have been led to do what of myself I should never have done, I shall judge that it comes through the will of heaven, which would have it so; and it is not for me to refuse what heaven wills me to accept. Therefore I take you for lord, master and guide. You shall be my father, my defender, my every good; and what my husband has wished for an evening I wish him to have always. Make a friend of him then and come to dine with us; to go or stay as you like; and we can always and without suspicion be together." I could have died for the sweetness of these words. I could not answer her a hundredth of what I should have liked to say. So that I am the happiest and most contented man that was ever in the world; and if this happiness does not fail me through death or through time I shall be more blessed than the blest, more holy than the saints.

LIGURIO

I take great pleasure in any good fortune of yours; and exactly what I said has happened to you. But what shall we do now?

CALLIMACO

Let's go on toward the church, for I've promised to be there and you will see her, her mother and the doctor.

LIGURIO

I hear his door opening: it's they and they are coming out with the doctor behind them.

CALLIMACO

Let's go into the church and wait for them there.

SCENE V

(NICIA, LUCREZIA, SOSTRATA)

NICIA

Lucrezia, I believe it's well to do things with the fear of God and not wildly.

LUCREZIA

What must we do now?

NICIA

Look how she answers! Like the cock of the roost.

SOSTRATA

Don't be surprised, she's a little upset.

LUCREZIA

What do you want to say?

NICIA

I say it's well that I'm going ahead to speak to the friar and to tell him that you will meet him at the church door to be blessed; for this morning it's just as if you had been born again.

LUCREZIA

Why don't you go?

NICIA

You are very bold this morning. Last night she seemed quite dead.

LUCREZIA

It's thanks to you.

SOSTRATA

Go find the friar. But there's no need, he's coming out of the church.

NICIA

So he is.

SCENE VI

(TIMOTEO, NICIA, LUCREZIA, CALLIMACO, LIGURIO *and* SOSTRATA)

TIMOTEO

I'm coming out because Callimaco and Ligurio have told me that the doctor and the ladies are coming to church.

NICIA

Bona dies, father.

TIMOTEO

You are welcome; and may God bless you, my lady, and give you a fine boy.

LUCREZIA

May God grant——

TIMOTEO

He will grant it by all means.

NICIA

I see Ligurio and Master Callimaco in the church.

TIMOTEO

Yes, Messer Nicia.

NICIA

Beckon to them.

TIMOTEO

They are coming.

CALLIMACO

God save you.

NICIA

Master, put your hand here on my wife.

CALLIMACO

Willingly.

NICIA

Lucrezia, this is he who will be the cause of our having a staff to prop our old age.

LUCREZIA

I hold him very dear and should like him to be our friend.

NICIA

Now bless you! And I want him and Ligurio to come and dine with us this morning.

LUCREZIA

By all means.

NICIA

I'm going to give them the key to the ground room on to the loggia, that they may make themselves at home there as suits their convenience, for they have no woman at home and live like the beasts.

CALLIMACO

I accept it and will use it when I have need of it.

TIMOTEO

I must have money for charity!

NICIA

Be sure, domine, it will be sent you to-day.

LIGURIO

And Siro, shall he not be remembered?

NICIA

Let him but ask, what I have is his. You, Lucrezia, how many groats must you give the friar to be purified?

LUCREZIA

Give him ten.

NICIA

Smotheration!

TIMOTEO

You, Donna Sostrata, as for you, it seems to me, you've put new sprouts on your old stem.

SOSTRATA

Who wouldn't be happy?

TIMOTEO

All of you go in the church and we'll say there the usual prayer: then after the office you go home to dinner. You, spectators, don't wait for us to come out: the office is long, and I shall remain in church; and they'll go home by the side entrance. Farewell.

END